STORIES AND POEMS FOR CHILDREN









RADUGA PUBLISHERS







STORIES AND POEMS FOR CHILDREN

DRAWINGS BY GEORGY YUDIN

Raduga Publishers. Moscow



TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

Compilation and notes on authors by Igor Bronetsky

ДЕТЯМ

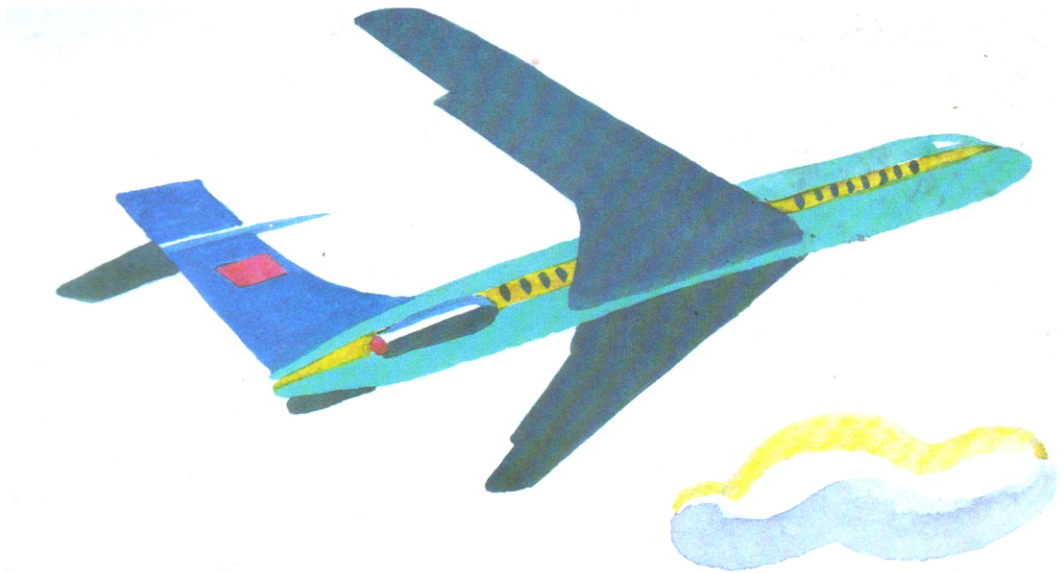
Рассказы, сказки и стихи
русских советских писателей

На английском языке

Selection and notes on authors © Raduga Publishers 1982. Illustrated

Д $\frac{70802\text{-}098}{031/01/\text{-}83}$ 115-82

4803010102



CONTENTS

Stories

Zoya Voskresenskaya	7	SURPRISE *Translated by Olga Shartse*
Arkady Gaidar	14	THE HOT STONE *Translated by Jan Butler*
Konstantin Paustovsky	21	FRESH BREAD *Translated by Fainna Glagoleva*
Mikhail Prishvin	32	THE MANY FLOORS OF THE FOREST
	35	YARIK *Translated by Fainna Solasko*
Vitaly Bianki	40	THE FIRST HUNT *Translated by Ronald Vroon*
	44	FOREST HOMES *Translated by Fainna Glagoleva*
Ivan Sokolov-Mikitov	50	THE CRANE AVIATOR
	55	A CAMP IN THE STEPPE *Translated by Jan Butler*
Boris Zhitkov	57	THE POST
	59	THE LITTLE WHITE HOUSE *Translated by Jan Butler*

Yevgeny Shvarts — 64 A TALE OF WASTED TIME
Translated by Fainna Solasko

Nikolai Nosov — 74 VISITING GRANDPA
Translated by Fainna Solasko

Eduard Uspensky — 80 BOBBY THE GUN DOG

83 GENA THE CROCODILE AND HIS FRIENDS (AN EXCERPT)
Translated by Jan Butler

Boris Zakhoder — 88 LITTLE GREY STAR
Translated by Jan Butler

Poems

Vladimir Mayakovsky — 99 WHAT SHALL I BE?
Translated by Dorian Rottenberg

Kornei Chukovsky — 108 WASH 'EM CLEAN
Translated by Eugene Felgenhauer

115 THE MUDDLE
Translated by Dorian Rottenberg

Samuel Marshak — 119 A HAPPY DAY
Translated by Dorian Rottenberg

124 IN THE VAN
Translated by Margaret Wettlin

Sergei Mikhalkov — 127 WHAT HAVE YOU?

131 MY PUPPY
Translated by Dorian Rottenberg

133 DOUBTING FOMA
Translated by Eugene Felgenhauer

Agnia Barto — 136 ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL

138 SERYOZHA'S HOMEWORK
Translated by Dorian Rottenberg

140 LEFT BEHIND
Translated by Avril Pyman

141 MY FIRST VISIT TO THE BALLET
Translated by Eugene Felgenhauer

STORIES



Zoya Voskresenskaya

(1907)

Zoya Voskresenskaya first heard about Lenin in her childhood. From then on this name came to be deeply cherished by her. She constantly quizzed anyone who had met Lenin and memorized everything they told her. And it was only many years later, after these initial scrappy notes had been reinforced by a systematic and profound study of documents and by long conversations with people who had spent a considerable length of time with Lenin that she decided to publish her first book about Lenin *Through the Frozen Haze.*

During her work on a book about Lenin's family she travelled every morning for several months in succession to Lenin's house museum in his home town of Ulyanovsk. She spent hours wandering round the old house, examining objects, reading comments in book margins made at some time or other by Lenin or one of his brothers and sisters, listening to the creaking wooden staircase... The house gradually came alive and resounded with the voices of the people who had once lived within its walls. And thus came into being the book *Surprise.*



Zoya Voskresenskaya

SURPRISE*

A strange being came to live in the attic of the Ulyanov house towards the end of February. The name of this strange being was Surprise. It was a restless sort, and made different noises–now whirring like a sewing machine, now squealing like a hand saw, now snorting like a fret saw.

The minute the children were left alone in the dining-room Surprise joined them and they all began to whisper together. It vanished when Mother appeared, and the children quickly resumed their seats, pretending nothing had happened.

The Surprise was safe with Anya, Sasha, Volodya and Olya. They had promised on their honour not to give it away to Mummy and Daddy. But there were Manyasha and Mitya to reckon with. Manyasha was only two, so she could be trusted not to talk, but Mitya was already six and he simply refused to have any secrets from Mummy.

One evening, unable to bear it any longer, he went up to his mother and whispered into her ear:

"Mummy, shall I tell you about Surprise? It's a secret."

"No, dear, I don't want to hear about it," she said. "Secrets must be kept, you must never give a secret away."

She stayed away from the children's attic kingdom in the evening lest she might run into Surprise. She sat in the dining-room, knitting and smiling to herself. When Anya asked if she might keep the money she had earned for lessons, her mother did not ask her what she needed it for. She did not even seem to notice that the sewing machine had moved to Anya's room. Father kept to his study where he tried to do some work, stopping his ears because Surprise was raising such a clatter upstairs.

At suppertime, the parents made no comment about the wood

* English translation © Progress Publishers 1976.

shavings caught in Volodya's curly hair, the bits of coloured thread stuck to Olya's dress, and the paint smeared all over Mitya's face. And strangely, Daddy never suggested a game of chess to Sasha now.

The clock alone had no consideration to spare the children. Surprise or no Surprise, it struck nine when it had to, telling them it was bedtime.

The sixth of March–Mother's birthday–was fast approaching.

The night before the big day it was imperative for Surprise to come down from the attic, and the parents very tactfully went out to visit friends.

Sasha and Volodya got busy polishing the floors and cleaning their own and their sisters' shoes until they shone like glass. Anya and Olya starched and ironed fresh white shirts for the boys, and ribbons for their own hair, while Mitya tidied up their toy boxes.

Manyasha alone was at a loose end, and to keep her happy Olya let her play with her Surprise.

Everything was ready, minutes remained before their parents came home, and then the blow fell!

Olya came running to Anya, and sobbed out the terrible news: "Look, look what Manyasha has done! And where on earth did she get the scissors!"

Anya gasped, and together they ran to their brothers for help. When Volodya saw Olya's tear-stained face, he took his handkerchief out of his pocket and mopped the tears away.

"Don't cry," he comforted his dearest playmate. "Sasha will find a way."

Nothing could distress Sasha, and even here, when everybody thought Surprise was ruined beyond recall, he thought of a way out. He drew the pattern. Anya matched the threads to embroider it with, and Volodya threaded several needles for Olya who stopped crying and quickly got down to work. Her Surprise became all the prettier now.

On March the 6th, Mother stayed in bed longer than usual and did not get up until after the children had gone to school, not to spoil their Surprise for them.

Lessons seemed to drag forever that day. When the bell rang at long last, Sasha and Volodya hurried to the girls' school to meet their



sisters, and they all ran home together. It was a lovely spring day, they all thought, with the sun shining so brightly and the streets dressed up in sparkling hoarfrost, while Volodya cocked an ear and found that the jackdaws sang as beautifully as starlings.

There was an air of festivity in the house.

Mother, dressed in her Sunday best, sat in the dining-room with Father, waiting for the children to come home from school.

A jolly bustle was heard in the attic. And now the six children came down the stairs in pairs: Manyasha and Mitya headed the procession, next came Olya and Volodya, and then Anya and Sasha. Each carried his Surprise behind his back.

They entered the dining-room and stopped just inside the door. Six pairs of shining eyes gazed at Mother. She looked so specially lovely today! Her blue dress with the white lace collar was so very becoming! Her sweet mouth was smiling, and there was a twinkle in her brown eyes. Father, dressed in his best frock coat, stood behind Mother's chair, beaming on his brood of children.

Anya came forward and spoke her piece in a ringing voice: "Our darling Mummy, we wish you a happy birthday, and we want you to be always healthy, happy, and smiling."

"Thank you, my dears, thank you," Mother said in a breaking voice, and tears rose to her eyes.

"Manyasha, it's your turn," Anya whispered to her baby sister.

Manyasha went running to her Mother and gave her the tiny bun she had shaped herself placed on a toy dish.

"It's for you," she said and quickly climbed in her mother's lap.

"Oh, how delicious!" Mother said, biting off a piece, while Manyasha stuffed what remained in her own mouth.

Mitya stepped forward, thrusting his lower lip out self-consciously. His Surprise was a birthday card on which he had himself written the words: "Dear Mummy, Happy Birthday, Mitya." The card was in-

The Ulyanov family. From the left, standing—Olya, Alexander, Anna; seated—Maria Alexandrovna with her youngest daughter Maria, Dmitry, Ilya Nikolaevich and Vladimir. 1879.

serted in an envelope on which he had painted fantastic flowers and animals in the brightest and gayest colours he could find, putting all his skill and imagination into the design.

Mother read his card out loud, and handed it to Father, saying: "Look, what a wonderful card!"

Father, too, was delighted with Mitya's Surprise.

Now, Olya came and laid a small cushion on her mother's knees. There were field flowers embroidered on a green ground, and in the very centre there was a large red poppy.

"Oh, what a pretty little cushion!" Mother cried. "It is so like a real meadow in spring! The poppy is the best of all, it's so natural, it's as if the wind had turned back this petal."

Olya stopped worrying: that particular petal had been Sasha's brainwave to hide the hole snipped out by Manyasha. The culprit glanced at the cushion, and thrust her guilty face into her mother's bosom.

Volodya sighed. That cushion had overshadowed all the presents. Would Mother like his, he wondered? He placed on the table before her the small house he had made for the starlings.

"I'll fix this to the elm tree outside the kitchen window, Mummy. Starlings will come to live in this house and they'll sing you songs. They're coming soon, you know."

"Oh, how lovely!" his mother sounded delighted. "When I was a little girl we had one exactly like this outside the nursery window. I've been fond of starlings ever since. Thank you, Volodya dear."

Sasha unwrapped the white-paper parcel he was carrying and produced a small bread board which, using a fret saw and file, he had turned into a thing of real beauty with a trimming of sheer lace, an intricate design of twigs and leaves, and an elaborate edging.

"Why, it's a bread board," his mother gasped. "I need one very badly, but this one's so beautiful that I couldn't bring myself to cut bread on it. I'll treasure it very, very much."

And now it was Anya's turn. Her Surprise was a flannel blouse, as soft and yellow as a baby chick, and it was trimmed with a brown collar and cuffs. She had bought the flannel with her first earnings, and cut and made the blouse herself. Her mother tried the blouse on, and liked it so much that she hated parting with it.

A door banged at the back of the house. Father laughed and said:

"That was Mister Surprise running away. There's nothing more for him to do here."

This sort of terminated the formal part of the ceremony, and the children became noisy and gay. The six of them took their seats at the table, with their mother presiding at the samovar, and their father sitting opposite at the other end.

"I have a surprise for all of us, too, for Mother's birthday," Father announced, opening a big envelope and taking out a photograph of the whole family.

The children remembered that blizzardy day in winter when they all went to the photographer's, they remembered what ages the man took to seat them all the way he wanted it, how he told them not to breathe or blink their eyes, and how frightened Manyasha was when he disappeared under the black cloth.

"How fortunate we are to have our Mummy," Father said. "She takes care of all of us and is very fond of us. Let us thank her for it and tell her how much we love her too."

ARKADY GAIDAR

(1904-1941)

In 1917 the October Socialist Revolution took place in Russia, and the working people came to power. The enemies of the Revolution did not lay down their arms, however, and Civil War broke out, lasting from 1918 to 1920. At that time Arkady Gaidar was fifteen years old, but he fought along with adults in the ranks of the Red Army against the counter-revolutionaries. Arkady Gaidar was no exception: in those dangerous years children grew up fast. Of course, at fifteen, Gaidar had no idea that he would become a writer and describe in his stories much of what he had seen and experienced during the Civil War.

Soviet children are very fond of Arkady Gaidar's books–*The School, A Tale about a War Secret, Chuk and Gek, Far-off Countries* and *The Blue Cup. Timur and His Team* is particularly popular story and has been adapted for the radio, stage and cinema.

Like the heroes of his books, Gaidar was daring, honest and kind. He wrote for children because he loved them with all his heart and sincerely wished them every happiness.



Arkady Gaidar

THE HOT STONE*

I

In a village once lived a weak and lonely old man who earned his living by weaving baskets and making felt boots and guarding the collective farm's orchard from little thieves.

He had come to the village from afar long ago but the locals at once realised that he had known much sorrow in his time. He was lame and grey beyond his years. A jagged lacerated scar ran across his cheek and lips and this made his face grave and sad even when he smiled.

II

One day young Ivashka Kudriashkin stole into the orchard to pick apples and secretly gorge himself on them. Unfortunately, his trousers got caught on a nail in the fence and he tumbled into a prickly gooseberry bush, scratching himself and letting out a howl, and thus was discovered by the watchman.

Of course, the old man could have walloped him with nettles or, worse still, hauled him off to school to complain but he took pity on him. Ivashka's hands were covered in scratches, his trousers hung down in tatters behind him like a lamb's tail and tears rolled down his flushed cheeks.

The old man silently led the terrified lad through the gate and let him run off without so much as lifting a finger against him or even shouting a single word after him.

III

Ashamed and miserable, Ivashka wandered into the wood, lost his way and stumbled upon a marsh. He finally grew tired and sat down on a blue stone sticking out of the moss but at once jumped up with a

* English translation © Raduga Publishers 1982.

yelp, thinking he had sat on a wild bee which had stung him painfully through the hole in his trousers.

However, there was no bee on the stone. It was as hot as burning coal and some letters covered with clay were traceable on its flat surface.

The stone must be magic Ivashka realised at once! He threw off his shoe and hurriedly began scraping the clay off the inscription with its heel and then read the following: "Whoever carries this stone up a hill and breaks it apart, will get his youth back and begin life anew."

Underneath stood a stamp but not a simple round or triangular one as normally found on official papers: this one was more intricate and consisted of two crosses, three tails, a hole with a squiggle and four commas.

Ivashka Kudriashkin was disappointed. You see, he was only eight and had no desire to begin life anew, that is, stay back in the first form at school for another year.

Mind you, it would have been quite another matter if, thanks to this stone, he could have skipped straight from the first form into the third without having to learn his lessons at school!

But for many years it has been common knowledge that not even the most magic stones can work miracles of this kind.

IV

As he passed sadly by the orchard, Ivashka again saw the old man, coughing and pausing frequently for a breather as he carried a bucket of slated lime with a bast brush on a stick slung over his shoulder.

Then Ivashka, who was a kind boy by nature, thought, "There goes a man who could very easily have walloped me with nettles but took pity on me instead. Now I'm jolly well going to take pity on him and give him back his youth so that he won't cough or limp or breathe so heavily any more."

And so with these good intentions kind-hearted Ivashka went up to the old man and explained everything to him straightaway. The old man solemnly thanked him but refused to leave his post and go off to

the marsh because at that time there were still people about who could very easily have used this opportunity to strip the orchard of fruit.

So the old man instructed Ivashka to drag the stone out of the marsh and up the hill himself, and then later on he would go up there and quickly break the stone apart with something.

Ivashka was very disappointed by the way things were turning out but did not have the heart to feel angry at the old man for turning his offer down. Next morning he found some tough sacking and thick mittens so as not to scorch his hands on the stone, and set off for the marsh.

V

After smearing himself in mud and clay, Ivashka managed somehow to drag the stone out of the marsh and collapsed in exhaustion on the dry grass at the foot of the hill.

"Done it!" he thought. "Now I'll roll the stone up the hill and the lame old man will come and break the stone apart, become young again and begin life anew. He's known much sorrow in his time, so people say. He's old, lonely, downtrodden, crippled and, of course, has never been happy unlike other people." He, Ivashka, on the other hand, was young and had already been truly happy on three occasions. Firstly, when he had been late for school and a complete stranger had driven him in a smart car straight to school from the farm stables. Secondly, when in spring he had caught a large pike in the ditch with his bare hands. And lastly, when Uncle Mitrofan had taken him to town to celebrate festive May Day.

"So let the poor old man also see how good life can be," decided Ivashka magnanimously.

He stood up and resolutely pushed the stone uphill.

VI

And so, towards sunset the old man came to the hill where Ivashka, exhausted and chilled to the bone, was huddled up and drying his dirty wet clothes against the stone.

"Why haven't you brought a hammer, axe or crowbar with you?"



exclaimed Ivashka in surprise. "Do you reckon you'll break the stone apart with your bare hands?"

"No, Ivashka, my boy," replied the old man, "I don't reckon I'll break it apart with my hands. I'm not even going to attempt to because I do not wish to begin life anew."

Then he came up to the tired boy and stroked his head. Ivashka could feel the old man's heavy palm shaking.

"In your eyes, of course, I am old, lame, ugly and unhappy," he said to Ivashka. "But, in fact, I'm the happiest man alive."

"My leg was maimed when a log fell on it but this happened when we were still inexperienced at knocking down fences and building barricades during the uprising against the tsar whom you've seen only in pictures.

"I had my teeth knocked out but this happened when we had been thrown in prison and were singing revolutionary songs all together. My face was slashed by a sabre in battle but this happened when the people's first regiments had already crushed and routed the enemies' army.*

"I caught typhus and tossed and turned feverishly on the straw in a cold cramped barrack. And the words ringing in my ears about how our country had been surrounded and how our forces were being overpowered by the enemies filled me with more dread than the thought of death. Gaining consciousness as the first rays of sunlight reappeared, I learnt, however, that the enemy had again been routed and that our forces were again advancing.

"And overjoyed, we stretched out our emaciated hands to one another across the bunks and dreamed of the day, no matter if it wasn't in our lifetime, when our country was bound to be powerful and great, just as it is today. Isn't that happiness, my silly little lad?! What do I need another life and another youth for when my own has been hard but purposeful and honest, to make up for it?"

Then the old man fell silent, got his pipe out and lit up.

* The old man is speaking of events in the Civil War in Russia (1918–1920) when the workers' and peasants' revolutionary forces waged battles first against the counter-revolutionaries and then against foreign enemies.–*Ed.*

"Yes, you're right!" Ivashka said quietly. "But if that's the case why did I bother to drag this stone up the hill when it could quite easily have stayed where it was in the marsh?"

"Let it lie in full view," said the old man, "and then you'll see what happens."

VII

Many years have passed since then but the stone is still lying untouched on the hill.

And many people go up and look at it, think for awhile, shake their heads and then go back where they came from.

I, too, went up there one day when I was in a bad mood and something was pricking my conscience. Well now, I thought, why don't I break the stone apart and begin life anew!

But I stood still for a long time and began to have second thoughts.

Oh no, I thought, when my neighbours see I'm young again they'll say, "There goes that young fool! He obviously wasn't able to make the most of one life and appreciate how lucky he was and so decided to begin all over again!"

I rolled a cigarette, lit it on the stone so as not to waste matches, and went my own way.

Konstantin PAUSTOVSKY

(1892-1968)



Konstantin Paustovsky transformed everything with which he came into contact. A flower at which he looked seemed to grow brighter, an unknown, ferocious dog would begin to wag its tail at his benevolent attention, while a guest at his house simply blossomed at his gentle, welcoming smile. Konstantin Paustovsky was an astonishing person and a remarkable writer. Paustovsky decided to become a writer when he was still a young man. But life so decreed that before that he be a factory-worker, a medical orderly during World War I, a sailor, a newspaper reporter and editor, and fight in the Red Army during the Civil War in Russia. Paustovsky's work was first printed only in 1932, when he was already forty years old. Paustovsky wrote mostly for adults, but his children's stories, such as *The Feline Thief, The Golden Tench, Fresh Bread* and *The Little Steel Ring* are immensely popular. Several generations of children have already found these warm-hearted and intelligent books an essential part of their lives.

Konstantin Paustovsky

FRESH BREAD*

A cavalry unit was passing through Berezhki Village when a German shell burst on the outskirts and wounded a black stallion in the leg.** The commander left the wounded horse in the village, and the unit moved on amidst clouds of dust and jingling bits, rolling on past the groves and the hills where the wind made the golden rye billow.

Pankrat the miller took the horse in. The mill had not been in use for quite some time, but flour dust was forever embedded in Pankrat. It lay as a grey crust on his padded jacket and cap. The miller's keen eyes looked out upon the world from under the vizor of his cap. Pankrat was a nimble, grumbling old man, and the children believed he was a sorcerer.

Pankrat cured the horse. The horse remained at the mill, docilely carting clay, manure and poles, helping Pankrat to repair the dam.

Pankrat did not have much to feed the horse, and so it took to calling at the village houses to beg for food. It would stop outside a cottage, snort and rap on the gate with its muzzle. Sure enough, someone would bring out a bunch of beet tops, some stale bread, or even a sweet carrot. The villagers said the horse belonged to no one or, rather, to everyone, and so each felt it his duty to feed it. Besides, the horse was wounded, maimed by the enemy.

A boy named Filka, nicknamed Go-Lay-an-Egg, lived in Berezhki Village with his granny. Filka was a taciturn, mistrustful boy, and his favourite expression was: "Oh, go lay an egg!" If the neighbour's boy suggested they walk about on stilts or hunt for old cartridges that had turned green Filka would reply in a deep, angry voice: "Oh, go lay an egg! You can look for them yourself!" When his granny scolded him

* English translation © Raduga Publishers 1982.

** All this took place during the Second World War when the Soviet armies were fighting against fascist Germany.–*Ed.*

for being so unfriendly Filka would turn away and mutter: "Oh, go lay an egg! You give me a pain."

The winter was mild that year. Smoke hung in the air. Snow would fall and melt instantly. Wet crows perched on the chimneys to dry, jostling and cawing at each other. The water by the mill race did not freeze, but was black and still with slivers of ice floating in it.

By then Pankrat had repaired the mill and was getting ready to grind the grain, for the village women complained they were running out of flour, with no more than a two- or three-days' supply left, while their grain was waiting to be ground.

On one such mild grey day the wounded horse knocked its muzzle at Filka's gate. His granny was not at home. Filka was sitting at the table, munching on a piece of bread that had been liberally salted. He rose reluctantly and went outside.

The horse shifted its weight from one hoof to another and reached out for the bread: "Go lay an egg, you!" Filka shouted and hit the horse's mouth hard. It backed away and shook its head. Filka tossed the bread far into the loose snow and shouted, "You'll eat us out of house and home, you beggars! There's your bread! Go dig it out of the snow with your teeth! Go on, dig it out!"

It was after his malicious taunt that the strange events occurred, events of which the villagers of Berezhki still speak and shake their heads, for they do not actually know whether it all happened or not.

A tear ran down the horse's cheek. It whinnied plaintively and swished its tail. A moment later a biting wind began to rage and whistle among the bare trees, the fences and the chimneys, blowing up the snow, making Filka gasp for breath. He dashed back into the house, but could not find the porch steps, for the wind and the snow were swirling and blinding him. Frozen straw was carried off the thatched roofs by the wind, birdhouses toppled, shutters were wrenched off their hinges and flapped. Columns of snowdust from the nearby fields soared ever higher, rushing towards the village, swishing, whirling and overtaking each other.

Filka finally burst into the house, shut and locked the door, said: "Oh, go lay an egg!" and listened closely. The raging blizzard roared, but still, over the roaring, Filka could hear a high-pitched, short whis-



tle, the kind of sound a horse's tail makes when it is angry and slaps it against its sides.

Towards evening the snowstorm began to die down, and only then was Filka's granny able to make her way home from the neighbour's house. That night the sky became as green as ice. The stars froze to the heavens, and a biting frost crept through the village. No one saw it, but everyone heard the squeaking of its felt boots on the hard-packed snow, everyone heard the frost making mischief, clenching the thick logs of the walls, making them creak and crack.

Filka's granny wept as she said that by now the wells had surely frozen over and that they would all surely perish. There was no water, no one had any flour left, and the mill could not turn now, for the river had frozen through to the very bottom.

Filka was terrified. He, too, began to cry when the mice started scampering out from the cellar to hide in the straw under the brick oven where there was still a little warmth left. "Darn you!" he shouted at the mice, but they kept pouring out of the cellar. Filka climbed onto the sleeping ledge on top of the oven, pulled his little sheepskin coat over him for a blanket and shivered as he listened to his granny's lamentations.

"The same kind of bitter frost settled on our district a hundred years ago," she was saying. "It froze the wells, killed the birds, and froze the roots of the trees in the forest and in the orchards. For ten years after no tree, no grasses nor flowers blossomed. The seeds in the ground shrivelled and died. Our land was bare. Even the wild beasts kept away, for they were afraid of our barren desert."

"What brought on such a frost?" Filka asked.

"Human spite," his granny replied. "An old soldier was passing through our village and stopped at one of the cottages to ask for some bread. The man of the house, a mean, sleepy-eyed, loud-mouthed peasant, gave him a stale old crust. And he didn't even hand it to him, but flung to the floor and said: 'There! Chew on that!'

"'I can't pick the bread up from the floor,' said the soldier. 'One of my legs is wooden.'

"'What'd you do with your leg?' the peasant asked.

"'I lost my leg in the Balkan Mountains fighting the Turks,' the soldier replied.

"'No matter. If you're real hungry, you'll pick it up,' the peasant said and laughed. 'There's no servants to wait on you here.'

"The soldier sighed, hopped about and finally managed to pick up the crust. But he saw it was not even good bread, but a mess of green mildew. Pure poison, it was! So he went out into the yard and whistled. In the twinkling of an eye a blizzard began to rage. The snowstorm swirled through the village, carrying off the roofs. Then a terrible frost set in. And that mean old peasant died."

"What'd he die of?" Filka asked hoarsely.

"Of cooling of the heart," his granny replied. She was silent for a while and then added: "There must be another evil person in Berezhki Village now who's done some mean, vile deed. That's why the frost has set in."

"What'll we do now, Granny?" Filka asked from under his sheepskin coat. "Are we going to die?"

"There's no sense in dying. We've got to hope."

"For what?"

"That the evil person makes amends for his villainy."

"But how?" Filka asked and sobbed.

"Pankrat the miller knows that. He's a wise and clever old man. He's the one to ask. But who'd think of going to the mill in this terrible frost? Your blood'll freeze in your veins."

"Oh, that old Pankrat can go lay an egg!" Filka muttered and said no more.

In the middle of the night he climbed down off the oven ledge. His granny was still sitting on the bench, fast asleep. The night outside was blue, and dense, and frightening. The moon in the clear sky above the black poplars was like a bride decked out in pink halo-wreaths.

Filka drew his coat tightly around him, dashed out of the house and ran towards the mill. The snow whined underfoot, quite as though a team of merry woodcutters were sawing down the birch grove across the river. It seemed that the air had frozen, and that all that remained between the heavens and the earth was a void, so burning and clear that if a dust mote were raised ever so high it would still be visible, and it would sparkle and twinkle like a tiny star.

The black willows beside the millpond had turned grey from the frost. Their branches glittered like glass. The cold air pierced Filka's chest. He could no longer run, but plodded on breathlessly, scooping snow into the tops of his felt boots.

Filka rapped on the window of Pankrat's cottage. At that very moment the wounded horse whinnied and struck its hoof on the ground in the barn behind the cottage. Filka groaned, crouched in fear and did not dare breathe. Pankrat opened the door, grabbed Filka by the scruff of his neck and dragged him inside.

"Sit close to the stove," he said, "and tell me what happened before you freeze."

Speaking through his tears, Filka told Pankrat of how he had been so mean to the wounded horse and of the bitter frost that had settled on the village because of him.

"Well," Pankrat said with a sigh, "things look pretty bad as far as you're concerned. It looks like everyone's doomed on account of you. Why were you so mean to the horse? What'd he ever do to you? You sure are a person with no sense at all."

Filka sniffled and wiped his tears on his sleeve.

"Quit bawling!" Pankrat said sternly. "You're all good at that. The minute any of you do some mischief you start bawling. But I don't see any sense in it. My mill's stuck. Seems like the frost's soldered it for good. And there's no flour, and no water, and nobody knows what to do."

"What'll I do now?" Filka asked.

"Think of some way to save us from the frost. Then the people'll forgive you. And the wounded horse will, too. Your conscience will be clear, and you'll be happy. Everyone'll pat you on the back and forgive you. Understand?"

"Yes," Filka replied in a crestfallen voice.

"Now start thinking. I'll give you an hour and a quarter to think of something."

A magpie lived in the outside hall of Pankrat's cottage. It was too cold for it to sleep, and so it perched on a horse's collar and eavesdropped. After a while, glancing around cautiously, it hopped over to the crack under the door. It crawled out, flew up onto the porch railing and took off, winging south. The magpie was an experienced

old bird and kept close to the ground, for there was some warmth rising up from the villages and forests on the way, and so it was not afraid of freezing. No one saw it except a fox that lived on an aspen-covered slope of a ravine. It stuck its muzzle out of its den, sniffed the air, saw the magpie flash across the sky like a dark shadow, darted back into its den and sat there for a long time after, scratching itself and wondering where the magpie was heading on such a terrible night.

All this happened while Filka had been sitting on a bench, fidgeting and trying to think of something.

"Well?" Pankrat finally said, stamping out his home-rolled cigarette. "Your time's up. Let's see what you've thought of. And you're not getting any extra time."

"As soon as it's light, I'll round up all the village boys. We'll get crowbars, ice scoops and axes, and we'll chop the ice near the mill race till we hit water and it runs onto the wheel. As soon as the water starts running, you start up the mill. If you turn the millstone twenty times it'll warm up and begin to grind. That means there'll be flour, and water, and everyone'll be saved."

"Aren't you smart!" said the miller. "Sure, there's water under the ice. But what if the ice is as high as you are? What'll you do then?"

"So what? Us boys'll chop through it anyway!"

"What if you get frozen?"

"We'll make bonfires."

"What if the boys won't want to work so hard to make up for your stupidity? What if they say: 'Oh, he can go lay an egg! It's all his fault. He can go chop the ice himself.'"

"They won't say that! I'll talk them into it. They're all good kids."

"All right. Run along and round them up, and I'll talk to the old men. Maybe they'll pull on their mittens and come along with their crowbars."

On frosty days the sun is bloody-red and shrouded in a heavy fog at sunrise. Just such a sun rose over Berezhki Village on that morning. The pounding of crowbars could be heard coming from the river. Bonfires crackled. Young boys and old men had been working there since dawn, chopping up the ice around the mill. They were so intent on the job that no one noticed that the sky had become covered with low-lying clouds some time after noon, nor that a warm, steady wind

was blowing over the grey willows. By the time they noticed the change in the weather, the ice on the willow branches had melted, and the wet birch grove across the river was rustling loudly and cheerfully. There was a smell of spring and manure in the air.

The wind was from the south. With each passing hour the air was becoming warmer. Icicles fell from the roofs and shattered with loud tinkling sounds. The crows emerged from under the eaves and again perched on the chimneys, drying their feathers, jostling each other and cawing.

The old magpie, however, was nowhere in sight. It came winging in towards evening, when the ice was beginning to settle in the warm air, when work at the mill was progressing so quickly that the first patch of dark water had appeared in the ice.

The boys pulled off their fur hats and cheered. Pankrat said that if not for the warm wind the boys and the old men would probably not have been able to break up the ice. Meanwhile, the magpie perched on a willow by the dam and was chattering away, but no one except the crows understood what it was saying. The magpie was saying that it had flown to the warm sea where the summer wind was asleep in the mountains. It had awakened the wind, it had told it all about the fierce frost, and begged it to banish the frost, and help the villagers.

The wind had apparently been unable to refuse the magpie. It had begun to blow, streaming over the fields, whistling and making fun of the frost. And if one were to listen closely one could hear trickles of warm water bubbling and gurgling in the ravines under the snow, bathing the roots of the lingonberry bushes, breaking up the ice on the river.

Everyone knows that the magpie is the greatest chatterbox in the world, and that is why the crows did not believe a word of its story. They simply cawed to each other, saying that the old magpie's imagination was running wild again.

To this very day no one knows whether the old magpie was telling the truth or whether it had made everything up and was simply boasting. One thing is certain, though: towards evening the ice cracked and split, and the boys and the old men leaned on the wheel together and the water rushed noisily into the mill race.

The old wheel creaked, sending down a shower of icicles, and began to turn slowly. The millstones rumbled. Then the wheel began to turn faster, and faster still, and suddenly the old mill shook and groaned. It began to clatter and creak, and grind the grain.

As Pankrat poured in the grain hot flour poured out from under the grindstones into the ready sacks. The women dipped their frozen hands into it and laughed.

In every yard there was the ringing sound of birch logs being chopped up for firewood. The cottages were lit up by the hot flames in the stoves. The women were kneading the stiff, fragrant dough. Everything that was alive in the cottages–the children, the cats, and even the mice–all were milling around the women, who would slap the children's backsides with their white, floured hands to keep them out of the dough and out of their way.

That night such an aroma of fresh bread with a golden crust and charred cabbage leaves stuck to the bottom of the loaves rose over the village that even the foxes crept out of their dens and sat up on the snow, shivering and whining softly, wondering how they might manage to steal just a bit of the wondrous bread from the villagers.

The next morning the village boys accompanied Filka to the mill. The wind was chasing scattered clouds across the blue sky. It would not give them a moment's respite, and that was why now cold shadows, now hot sun-spots raced across the ground.

Filka had brought along a loaf of fresh bread. A very small boy named Nikolka was carrying a small wooden salt cup filled with coarse yellow salt. Pankrat appeared on the threshold and said:

"What's this procession all about? Are you bringing me an offering of bread and salt? What've I done to deserve this honour?"

"No!" the boys shouted. "We've something special for you later. This is for the wounded horse. It's from Filka. We want them to make up."

"Yes, indeed," said Pankrat. "Others besides people need to be apologized to. I'll bring the horse out in person."

Pankrat opened the barn door and led out the horse. It stretched forth its head and whinnied, for it smelled the fresh bread. Filka broke a chunk off the loaf, salted it from the wooden salt cup and offered it to the horse. But the horse would not take it. It shifted its

weight quickly from hoof to hoof and then backed away into the barn. Filka became frightened. Then, with all his friends looking on, he burst into tears. The boys began to whisper among themselves and finally fell silent. Pankrat patted the horse's neck and said:

"Don't be scared, boy. Filka's not really mean. Don't make him feel bad. Take the bread and make up."

The horse bobbed its head, thought this over and then extended its neck cautiously. Finally, its velvety lips took the bread from Filka's hand. The horse ate the chunk, sniffed at Filka and took another chunk. Filka smiled through his tears as the horse chewed on the bread and snorted. When it had eaten the entire loaf it laid its head on Filka's shoulder, sighed and closed its eyes blissfully, for it had had its fill.

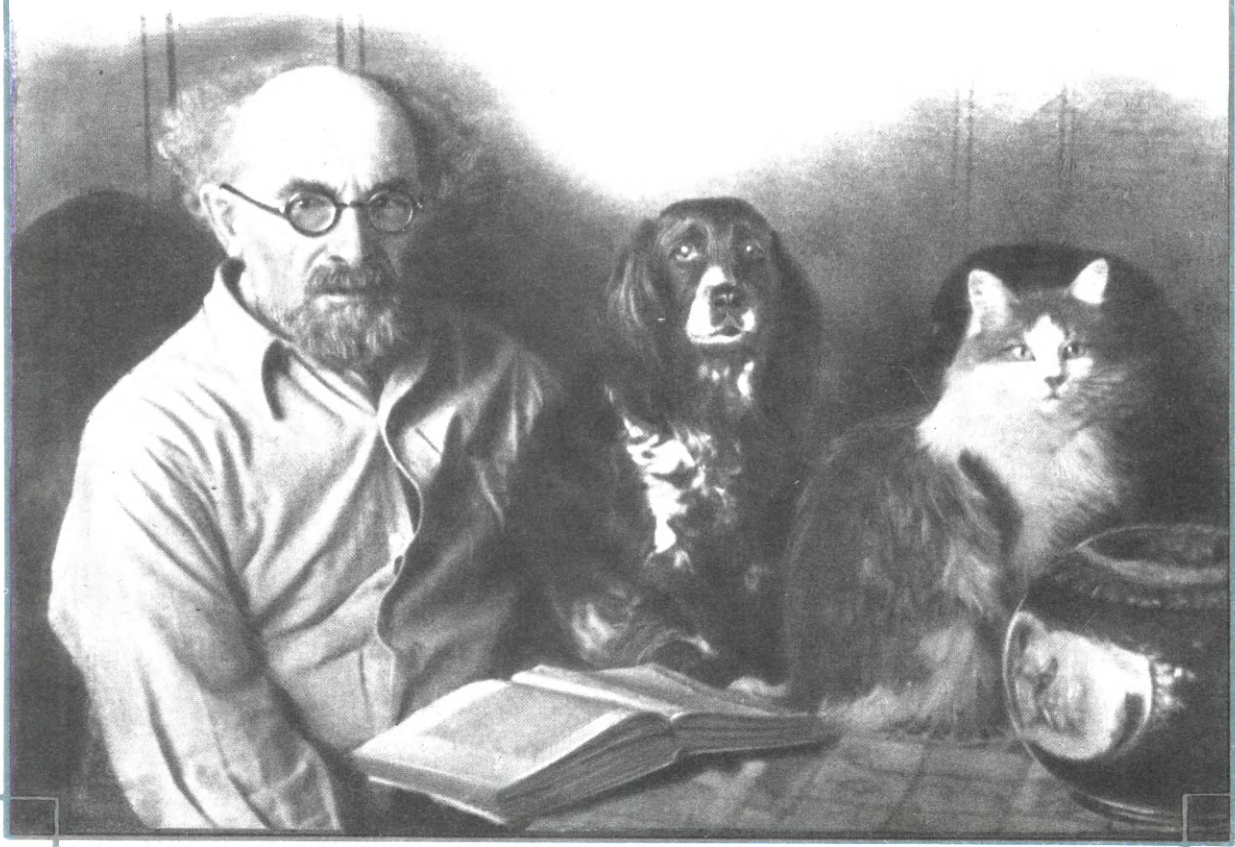
Everyone smiled, everyone was happy. All but the old magpie that was perched on a willow, chattering angrily. It was probably bragging again, saying it had made the horse and Filka friends at last. But no one was listening to it and no one could understand it. This made the magpie so angry it began rattling away even faster.

Mikhail PRISHVIN *1873-1954*

Every keen reader has a special shelf where he keeps his favourite books. In the Soviet Union these often include Prishvin's short stories *The Golden Meadow, Yarik, The Vixen's Bread, The Sun's Treasure,* and *The Many Floors of the Forest.*

The writer spent most of his life travelling. His name was even given to a mountain peak in the Caucasus. All his life he was an indefatigable hunter of a special kind. He was not interested in getting a large bag– hunting for him was simply a unique way of studying nature. And it was namely nature that Prishvin loved so deeply and tenderly and portrayed so wonderfully in his books.

The writer had astonishingly keen eyes and sharp hearing. He saw green dandelions opening out and turning golden, mushrooms rising from the sweet-smelling moist earth, a mischievous squirrel munching through a juicy fresh cone, and watched, not just once but day by day, a gun-dog growing up and becoming more and more alert.



Mikhail Prishvin

THE MANY FLOORS OF THE FOREST*

The birds and the animals of the forest have their own floors: the mice live among the tree roots in the basement; there are birds like the nightingale who build their nests on the ground; thrushes live higher up, in the bushes; the birds who live in hollow trees, the woodpecker, titmouse and owl, are still higher up, while the birds of prey, the hawks and eagles, live at various heights of the tree trunk and at the very top, in the crown.

Once, while in the woods, I had occasion to discover that the animals and birds do not regard the various floors of the forest as people do the floors of their apartment houses. We can always move from floor to floor, but in the animal kingdom each species always lives on its own floor.

When out hunting one day, we came upon a clearing in which there were some dead birch trees. As is often the case, birches keep growing until they reach a certain age and then die. Other trees lose their bark when they die, and that is why the naked trunk soon rots, sending the tree crashing to the ground. Birches, however, do not drop their bark, which is resinous, white on the outside and serves as an impenetrable case for the trunk. That is why a dead birch tree remains standing for ever so long, as if it were alive.

Even when the tree rots and the wood turns to water-logged dust a birch remains upright, as always. However, if you push it hard it will suddenly break up into several heavy lengths and fall. It's fun to push over such trees, but dangerous, too, for if you're not quick enough a falling chunk might hit you on the head. Still and all, we hunters are not bothered by this, and whenever we come upon such birch trees we vie with each other in pushing them over.

Thus, when we came to the clearing with a group of such birches

* English translation © Raduga Publishers 1982.

growing in it we pushed over a rather tall tree. As it fell, it broke up into several long chunks in the air. One had a hollow in it and the nest of a marsh titmouse in the hollow. The fledgelings were not hurt by the fall, for they were thrown clear together with their nest. The downy nestlings opened their red mouths wide. Taking us for their parents, they cheeped and begged for worms. We dug up some earth, found a few worms and offered them a snack; they gobbled them up and asked for more.

Soon their parents, a pair of marsh titmice with puffy white cheeks and each carrying a worm, settled on two nearby trees.

"Hello, dears," we said to them. "There's been a terrible accident."

The birds could not reply, but, what was more important, they could not understand what had happened, where the tree was, nor where their children had vanished to. They were not at all afraid of us and flitted from branch to branch in alarm.

"Look, they're here!" we said, pointing to the nest on the ground. "Here they are. Can't you hear them cheeping and calling you?"

The titmice would not listen. They bustled, they were distraught, yet they would not venture down beyond the boundaries of their own floor.

"Perhaps they're afraid of us," we said to each other. "Let's hide." And we hid.

No! The fledgelings cheeped, their parents chirped and flitted about, but would not descend.

That was when we realised that the lives of birds are not arranged as ours are in our tall buildings. They could not move to another floor. Now they felt that their entire floor, nestlings and all, had vanished.

"My goodness, how foolish you are," my friend said to them.

We were both sorry and amused. Here they were, such dear, winged little creatures, yet they simply refused to understand what had happened.

Then we took the large piece of the trunk in which the nest had been, put the nest back into the hollow and stuck the piece securely on a branch of a nearby birch, as high up from the ground as the vanished floor had been.

We did not have to wait in ambush long: a few minutes later the happy parents were greeting their fledgelings.

YARIK*

There were many tall, spiked red flowers growing around the old black stumps in a clearing, making the clearing seem red, though there were even more tricoloured violas, flowers that were half-yellow and half-blue. There were also many daisies, campanulas and bluebells, indeed, every imaginable kind of flower. Yet, the red spiked flowers made the whole clearing seem red. Here and there by a black stump one could find an overripe and very sweet wild strawberry.

A summer shower is never unpleasant, and I sat it out under a fir tree. Here, too, being that it was a dry spot, mosquitoes found shelter from the rain, and no matter how hard I blow the smoke from my pipe at them, they kept on tormenting my dog Yarik. I was forced to build a fire. Smoke rose in clouds from the fir cones, so that very soon we had evicted the mosquitoes. However, no sooner had we gotten rid of them, than the rain stopped. Summer showers are truly a joy.

Still, we had to remain there under the fir for another half an hour, waiting for the birds to come out to feed and make fresh tracks in the wet grass.

That is how we eventually came out upon the red clearing. I said: "Start looking," and let Yarik go. I often regard his nose with envy, saying to myself, "Now, if I had such a contraption I'd run into the breeze across a blossoming clearing, catching ever new and fascinating scents!"

"Go on, start looking!" I repeated.

And Yarik was off, circling around and around the red clearing.

He soon came to a halt under the trees, sniffed intently at the spot, gave me a sidelong but very grave look and invited me to follow him. We understood each other without speaking. He led me off very slowly, pressing ever closer to the ground until he actually began to resemble a fox.

Thus, we came to a thicket which only Yarik could crawl through. I was afraid to let him in alone, though, for he might become overly excited by the birds and pounce on them when they were still wet

* English translation © Raduga Publishers 1982.

from the rain, and so ruin all the results of my training. I was about to call him back regretfully when he suddenly feathered with his magnificent wing-like tail and glanced at me. I understood. He was saying:

"They spent the night here, but they fed in the clearing."

"What'll we do?" I asked.

He sniffed at the flowers: there was no scent. It was clear to me now. The rain had washed it away. The tracks we had followed had been preserved, because they had passed under the trees. Yarik would have to circle around again. He had not even completed half a circle when he stopped beside a small but very dense bush. He had caught the scent of grouse in mid-air and so had been brought up short in a very strange pose, with his body forming a semi-circle. Had he wished to, he might now have admired his magnificent tail to his heart's content. I hurried over to him, patted him and whispered:

"Go on, if it's all right."

He straightened out, tried to move ahead and found that it was all right, as long as he moved very softly. Thus, after going full circle around the bush, he gave me to understand:

"They were here during the rain." And as he led me along the freshest track, the long hair of his tail brushed the ground.

They apparently had heard us and had also begun to move forward. I understood this by looking at Yarik. He was reporting in his own way:

"They're moving ahead of us, and they're very close."

The grouse all moved into a large juniper bush. And then Yarik pointed. Up until now it had been permissible for him to open his mouth from time to time and breathe through it, letting his long red tongue loll; now, however, his jaws were tightly clamped, with only the tiny tip of his tongue, which had not been retracted in time, protruding from under his lip like a pink petal. A mosquito settled on the pink tip, plunged in its stinger and began to suck his blood. I could see the dark-brown, oilcloth-like tip of Yarik's nose twitch from the pain and dance from the scent, but he could not pull in his tongue, for if he opened his mouth the strong smell of his breath might reach the birds and scare them.

But I was not as excited as Yarik. I came up stealthily, flicked the mosquito away and admired his pose: he stood with his wing-like tail

in a line with his back, and his whole being was concentrated in two points in his eyes.

I circled around the bush soundlessly and stopped opposite him, so that the birds could not fly away unnoticed, but would be flushed.

We stood there like that for quite some time. Naturally, the grouse in the bush were aware that we were standing on either side of them. I took a step towards the bush and heard the grouse hen's voice. It clucked. What it said to its chicks was:

"I'll fly out and have a look. You sit still, meanwhile." And the grey hen flew out of the bush noisily.

Had it flown in my direction, Yarik would not have moved, and even if it had flown over him he would not have forgotten that the main quarry was in the bush, nor that racing after a flushed bird was a terrible crime.

However, the large grey bird that was nearly as big as a hen suddenly tumbled in the air, flew right up to Yarik's nose and then flew on slowly and close to the ground, luring him on with its cries: "Come, catch me! I can't fly!"

And just as though it were wounded, the hen fell into the grass ten paces away and ran on, making the tall red flowers sway.

This was too much for Yarik. Forgetting my years of training, he dashed after it.

The ruse worked. The hen had lured the beast away from its brood. Now it called out to its children who were hiding in the bush: "Fly! Fly out in all directions!" Then the grouse hen soared up over the trees and was gone. The young birds flew out in all directions. Yarik probably interpreted their cries to mean:

"You fool! You fool!"

"Back!" I shouted to my duped friend.

He came to his senses and returned slowly and guiltily. Speaking in a certain kind of pitiful voice, I said:

"What did you do?"

He lay down.

"Come on, come here."

He crawled closer guiltily, lay his muzzle on my knee and begged me to forgive him.

"All right," I said, sitting down in the centre of the bush. "Come



on in here, but sit still and don't breathe through your mouth. We're going to play a trick on that whole company."

About ten minutes later I whistled like baby grouse do: "Phew! Phew!"

That meant: "Where are you, Mama?"

"Cluck, cluck!" she replied. That meant: "I'm coming!"

Then the same sort of piping whistle I had whistled was heard coming from many spots around us:

"Where are you, Mama?"

"I'm coming! I'm coming," she replied to them all.

One chick was whistling quite close to me. I whistled back. It came running, making the tall grass by my knee rustle.

I stared hard at Yarik, shook my fist at him and quickly covered the moving spot with my hand, pulling up a grey chick the size of a pigeon.

"Go on, sniff it," I whispered to Yarik.

He turned his nose away, afraid to let out his breath.

"Come on, boy," I coaxed, "have a sniff."

He sniffed and looked as if he would explode.

It was a terrible punishment.

Now I whistled confidently, knowing that the hen would most certainly come running to me. She'd gather up her brood, see that one was missing and would come running in search of the missing chick.

There were seven chicks besides mine. I heard each one in turn calming down as it found its mother. When all seven were still I, the eighth, called out:

"Where are you, Mama?"

"Come, join us!" she replied.

"Phew! Phew! (No, you bring everyone here.)"

And there she was, hurrying along. Now here, now there in the grass, like the neck of a bottle, her neck would appear. Following behind in the moving grass was the entire brood. They stopped about two paces away. Then my eyes said to Yarik:

"Don't be a fool this time!"

And I let out my chick. It flapped its wings through the branches of the bush, and all the others flapped and rose into the air. Yarik and I stood there watching them fly away and laughed.

"The joke's on you this time!"

VITALY BIANKI



1894 *1959*

As a boy Bianki spent all his spare time in the woods, trying to understand what the birds were chirping about and why some animals built their nests in trees and others in or under water. Hidden in some bushes, he would wait patiently until the woods finally revealed yet another wonderful secret...

After graduating from university he went on expeditions to various distant parts of the country where he saw and learnt a great deal and later recorded his observations in his books for children *Whose Feet are Those?, Whose Voice is That?, Forest Homes, The First Hunt* and *The Little Mouse Pik.*

In his true woodland stories Bianki described in a lively and entertaining manner animals' habits, their deftness, cunning and knack of slipping away and hiding. Answering many of the children's questions, he reveals all sorts of secrets of nature.

Vitaly Bianki

THE FIRST HUNT*

Puppy was sick and tired of chasing chickens around the yard.

"I'm going to track down wild birds and beasts," he decided.

So he wriggled under the gate and ran toward the meadow.

As he ran, wild beasts and birds and insects saw him. And each began to think to himself.

"I'll trick him!" thought Bittern Bird.

"I'll surprise him!" thought Hoopoe Bird.

"I'll give him a fright!" thought Wryneck Bird.

"I'll give him the slip!" thought Lizard.

The caterpillars, the butterflies, and the grasshoppers all thought:

"We'll hide from him!"

"And I shall drive him away!" thought Bombardier Beetle.

"We can all stand up for ourselves, each in his own way!" they all thought to themselves.

Meanwhile Puppy had run up to the pond and spied Bittern, standing by the reeds on one leg.

The water reached to his knee.

"Oho!" thought Puppy, "I'll catch him right now." He poised himself to spring onto his back. But Bittern glanced at him and strode into the reeds. The wind whipped about the pond. The reeds bent and swayed

back and forth
back and forth.

Brown and yellow stripes swayed before Puppy's eyes

back and forth
back and forth.

Bittern stood in the reeds, all painted in yellow and brown stripes. He stood and he swayed

* English translation © Progress Publishers 1978.

back and forth
back and forth.

Puppy opened his eyes wide and stared and stared, but he could not spot Bittern in the reeds.

"Huh," he thought, "Bittern has tricked me. I'm not about to jump into an empty patch of reeds! I'll just catch myself another kind of bird."

He ran over to a hillock and gazed about.

There sitting on the ground was Hoopoe.

The bird was playing with his topknot, now opening it wide, now closing it tight.

"Aha!" thought Puppy, "I'll pounce on him from this hillock right now!"

But Hoopoe fell to the ground, spread his wings, fanned out his tail, and raised his beak in the air.

Puppy stared.

There was no bird at all, only a coloured rag from which a crooked needle protruded.

Puppy marvelled.

What had become of Hoopoe?

"Did I take this coloured rag for a bird? I'll hurry off and catch a small bird!"

He dashed over to a tree and sure enough, a small bird was perched on a branch, Wryneck.

Puppy rushed at him, but Wryneck scuttled into a hollow in the tree.

"Oho!" thought Puppy. "I have him now!"

He stood up on his hind legs and peeked into the hollow.

There in the black hole a black snake writhed and hissed terribly.

Puppy leaped back.

His fur stood on end and he took to his heels.

Wryneck hissed at him from the hollow.

He twisted his head right and left, and all along his back, like a snake, coiled a stripe of black feathers.

"Woof! What a fright! I've had a narrow escape! I'm not going to hunt birds anymore. I'd do better to catch a lizard."

Lizard sat on a rock, eyes closed, warming himself in the sun.

Quietly Puppy crept toward him–then leaped–and grabbed him by the tail.

Lizard jerked away, leaving his tail in Puppy's clenched teeth, and crawled under the rock.

The tail wriggled between Puppy's teeth.

Puppy snorted, dropped the tail, and made for Lizard.

But it was too late.

He was sitting peacefully under the rock, growing himself a new tail.

"Well," thought Puppy, "if Lizard has given me the slip, I'll just catch some insects."

He looked around.

Beetles ran along the ground. In the grass the grasshoppers jumped. Along branches caterpillars crawled, and in the air flew butterflies.

Puppy took off after them, but all of a sudden everything about him changed.

It was quite a puzzle: all were right there, but he couldn't see them. Everyone was hiding.

Green grasshoppers hid in the grass.

Caterpillars stretched themselves along branches and lay very still.

You could not tell them from the twigs of the tree.

Butterflies alighted on trees, closing their wings. There was no way to tell which was the bark, which the leaves, and which the butterflies.

Only tiny Bombardier Beetle crawled along the ground and did not hide.

Puppy chased after him.

He wanted to grab him, but Bombardier Beetle stopped short and fired a quick sharp stream at the pup.

It got right into his nose!

Puppy yelped and jumped back; tail between his legs, he ran over the meadow and under the gate.

He hid in the kennel and was afraid even to poke his nose out the door for a long, long time.

And the beasts and the birds and the insects once again went about their business, each in his own way.

FOREST HOMES*

High over the river, above a steep cliff, young river swallows darted back and forth chasing each other, shrilling and twittering. They were playing tag in the air.

Little Swallow was so quick that none of the other birds in the flock could catch her. She always managed to duck or dart away.

Whoever was "it" would chase after Little Swallow, and she would fly hither and thither, up and down, streaking off so fast her wings never stopped moving, not even for a moment.

Suddenly Falcon appeared in the blue sky. The wind whistled through the feathers of his sharply-curved wings.

The flock of swallows was terror-stricken. They scattered instantly, each swallow flying off in a different direction. In a flash they were gone.

Little Swallow never once looked back as she winged away over the river, the wood and the lake beyond.

Falcon was a very dangerous bird to play tag with.

Little Swallow flew on and on until she had no strength to fly any farther. Then she turned to look back. No one was chasing her. She looked around and saw that she was in a strange place. She looked down and saw a river, but this was not a familiar river, it was one she had never seen before.

Little Swallow became frightened.

She could not recall the way back home and no wonder, for she had been so terrified she had never looked around to get her bearings.

It was late afternoon and would soon be evening. What was she to do?

She flew down, perched on a twig and wept bitterly. Suddenly, she saw a little yellow bird with a black neckband come running along the sand.

Little Swallow was happy to see it. "Won't you please tell me how to get home?" she said.

"Where are you from?"

* English translation © Progress Publishers 1977.

"I don't know."

"You'll have a hard time finding your home if you don't know where it is. The sun will soon go down and then it'll be dark. Why don't you stay over at my house? My name is Plover, and I live nearby."

Plover ran off a few steps and pointed his beak at the sand. Then he bowed and swayed on his spindly legs and said, "Here's my house. Come on in."

Little Swallow looked hard, but could not see anything that resembled a house. All she could see were sand and pebbles.

"Can't you see it? Here, over here, where the eggs are."

Little Swallow finally made out the four speckled eggs lying among the pebbles right on the sand.

"What's the matter? Don't you like my house?"

Little Swallow didn't know what to say, for if she said it was no house at all, Plover would be hurt. That was why she said, "I'm not used to sleeping out in the open on cold sand that has nothing to cover it."

"That's too bad. Try Dove's house in the fir grove over there. He has a house with a floor. You can spend the night there."

"Thank you." Little Swallow flew off to the fir grove. She had no trouble finding Dove and asked him to let her spend the night at his house.

"All right, if you like it here."

Actually, all there was to his house was a floor. It was as full of holes as a sieve. He had simply thrown some twigs across the branches every which way.

There were white eggs on the twigs. You could see them from below through the holes in the floor.

Little Swallow was surprised. "There's only a floor. Your house doesn't have any walls. How can you sleep here?"

"Well, if you want a house that has walls, you'd better try Oriole's place. I think you'll like it."

Dove told Little Swallow the address: the most beautiful birch tree in the grove.

Little Swallow flew off towards the birch grove. All the trees there seemed beautiful to her. She searched hard for Oriole's house until

she saw a lovely little house attached to a small branch. It seemed very cozy and looked just like a rose made of fine bits of grey paper.

"What a tiny house Oriole has! There's no room for me at all," Little Swallow said to herself. Still, she decided to knock. At that very moment a swarm of hornets came buzzing out of the little grey house. They swarmed around her and buzzed angrily. They looked as though they might sting her.

Little Swallow flew away from them as fast as she could, off through the bright-green leaves.

All of a sudden something gold and black flashed by. Then Little Swallow made out a golden bird with black wings on one of the branches.

"Where are you hurrying to, Little Swallow?"

"I'm looking for Oriole's house."

"I'm Oriole. My house is right here on this beautiful birch tree."

Little Swallow looked at the spot, but could not see anything except the green leaves and white branches of the tree. When she had a really good look she gasped.

There, high above the ground, a light, pocket-shaped basket was attached to a little branch. It was beautifully woven of fibres, grass, strands of wool and hair, and bits of paper-thin birch bark.

"Oh! I'd never stay in such a flimsy house! It makes me dizzy just to see it swinging in the wind. It looks like it'll be blown away any minute. Besides, you have no roof."

Golden Oriole sounded hurt as she said, "Then go to Chiff-Chaff's house. If you're afraid of sleeping outdoors you'll probably like her tent, because it has a roof."

Little Swallow set off for Chiff-Chaff's house.

Yellow Chiff-Chaff lived in the grass near the birch tree where Oriole's hanging basket was.

Little Swallow liked her tent: it was made of dry grass and moss. "How cozy this is. It has a floor and walls, and a roof, and a feather bed. Just like our home."

Chiff-Chaff was very glad to have company. She was just telling Little Swallow where to sleep when the ground began to tremble. Little Swallow was frightened. She cocked her head and listened to the thundering noise, but Chiff-Chaff said:



"It's only some horses galloping towards the grove."

"Will your roof cave in if a horse steps on it?"

Chiff-Chaff nodded sadly.

"Oh, this is a terrible place!" Little Swallow darted out of the tent. "I'd never be able to sleep a wink here, what with worrying about being crushed to death. Our home is much safer. No one will ever step on you or dash you to the ground."

"You probably have a house like Grebe's," Chiff-Chaff said. "Her house isn't on a tree, so the wind can't blow it away, and it's not on the ground, so no one can step on it. Do you want me to take you there?"

"Yes!"

And so they flew off to the lake to find Grebe.

There, on a little island of reeds surrounded by water was a large-headed bird. Its head feathers stuck up like tiny horns.

Chiff-Chaff said goodbye to Little Swallow and told her to ask the horned bird to let her stay for the night.

Little Swallow flew to the island in the middle of the lake. She was surprised to see it floating. It was a pile of dry reeds bobbing on the water. There was a dent in the middle of the pile and it was lined with soft swamp grass. Grebe's eggs were on it, covered over with some thin dry reeds.

Grebe was perched on the edge of the floating island, sailing around the lake as if the island was a boat.

Little Swallow told Grebe about her search for a place to spend the night and asked if she could stay on the island.

"Are you afraid to sleep on the waves?"

"But don't you tie up at the bank for the night?"

"My house isn't a boat. It goes wherever the wind blows, so we'll be rocking and bobbing all night."

"I'm scared. I want to go home!"

Grebe became angry. "My! Aren't you fussy! Nothing seems to please you! Well, you go find yourself whatever you want." And she chased Little Swallow away.

Little Swallow flew off. She was weeping bitterly, for it was getting darker and darker. Soon she reached a dense wood and saw a house on a large branch of a tall fir tree. It was round and made of sticks and branches. The inside was lined with soft, warm moss.

"Just the place I've been looking for. It's sturdy and it has a roof."

Little Swallow flew up to the big house, tapped on the wall with her beak and said in a pitiful voice, "Won't you please let me in for the night?"

Suddenly a terrible brown furry head with bristling whiskers and yellow teeth appeared. The monster growled: "Since when do birds come knocking at squirrels' houses at night, asking to be let in?"

Little Swallow was frightened to death. Her blood froze. She darted away, soared over the wood and flew off as fast as she could, never once looking back.

She flew on and on until she had no strength to fly any farther. She turned to look back. No one was chasing her. She looked down and saw a river. It was her own dear river!

She plummetted down to the river, and just as she reached the surface she soared up again to the edge of the steep cliff.

And there she disappeared.

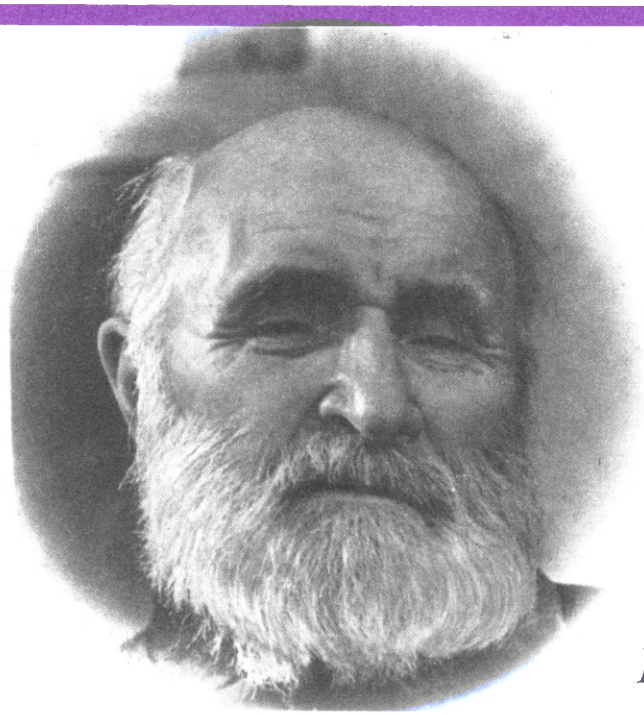
The side of the cliff was dotted with holes. Each hole was a swallow's nest. Little Swallow had disappeared into one of the holes. She darted into it and ran down a very, very narrow tunnel. When she reached the end of it she flitted into a round, roomy den.

Her mother was waiting for her there.

Tired Little Swallow slept ever so soundly that night on her own soft, warm bed of dry grass, horsehair and feathers.

Goodnight.

IVAN SOKOLOV-MIKITOV



1892 *1975*

As a child, Ivan knew no greater joy than to travel with experienced hunters on their expeditions and listen to their original stories around the camp-fire. And as an adult Ivan Sokolov-Mikitov found it impossible to stay long in one place. His urge to travel drove him from his city flat to the fishermen in the southern seas and the Siberian geologists. Friends might write to him being in care of an expedition rescuing an ice-breaker, with which he had only just been seen, only to discover that he was already wandering the Tian Shan Mountains with a team of geologists.

His eyes saw nature's close-locked secrets. From feathers floating down a forest stream he would deduce the nocturnal drama that had taken place when a stalking otter had pounced on a moor-hen grown careless by the water. The unusual behavior of a jackal would tell him that the predator was hunting with a partner. One would drive a goose out of the water, while the other lay in wait for the bird on the bank.

Individual observations such as these, or a string of events, go to make up Sokolov-Mikitov's fascinating tales of nature, animals, and, of course, people.

Ivan Sokolov-Mikitov

THE CRANE AVIATOR*

Flying over the taiga, I heard many interesting woodland and hunting stories from the pilots who had had occasion to watch wild animals in their natural habitat. On the woodland aerodrome I was shown a small lively bear cub which had been brought out of the taiga by plane and immensely enjoyed human company. Tumbling over comically, this furry aviator would chase after goats which had penetrated the zone prohibited to trespassers, as if acting as a strict watchman. Apart from the flying bear cub, at the air detachment's headquarters also lived a squirrel called Dusya who got on famously with everyone. It had been caught in a river by some pilots (squirrels often swim across wide rivers in search of a new feeding ground). Most of all, however, the crew loved and admired a tame crane by the name of Vasily Ivanovich, which strutted grandly around the aerodrome like an air-traffic controller. It was monitoring, as it were, that everything was running according to schedule and one might have thought that no plane could possibly have taken off without it. The crane stayed on the aerodrome day and night, and in the dark it was strange to glimpse by the lights of an aircraft that had just landed, its tall one-legged silhouette on sentry duty.

While I was living with the pilots at the woodland detachment, observing and getting to know the life of the people there, my imagination was captivated by the story of the crane called Vasily Ivanovich whose intelligence and attachment to the aerodrome astounded me.

One day Captain Yermakov was doing a routine flight over the taiga when his engine began playing up and he was forced to make an emergency landing.

Landing in a dense forest is especially dangerous. From a high altitude the pilot looked down at the large open marsh below, switched off his engine and began gliding lower and lower.

* English translation © Raduga Publishers 1982.

He managed to land safely between the trees in the marsh without damaging his aircraft. During the landing, however, the aircraft ploughed into the marsh and overturned. The pilot clambered out and looked round.

The open marsh stretched out for many miles around. The pilot located the spot on his map, sent his mechanic off to fetch help and decided to wait patiently by his aircraft for the rescue party.

"They'll most likely miss me soon and call out a search," he thought, getting ready for a night's sleep.

He was not in the slightest ruffled by his mishap because he knew that his colleagues would unfailingly start searching for him soon. He had few provisions but, to make up for it, had a hunting gun and cartridges, and did not feel imperilled.

As it turned out, he spent over a week on the marsh. Every day he went off hunting and slept on the wing of the aeroplane at night.

One day, as he was wandering across the marsh, he caught a baby crane, a long-legged overgrown fledgling which had not yet learnt to fly properly. He tied it by the leg to the overturned aircraft.

"I did not know what cranes fed on and started bringing it frogs from the marsh and gathering berries," explained the pilot later, describing his daily chores.

The pilot and the crane lived together in the wood for a week. The pilot was found several days later. A plane flew overhead and dropped him a note, a bag of provisions and some gun cartridges. Shortly afterwards, his mechanic arrived at the plane with a rescue party.

A lot of work was to be done. They had to clear a take-off strip in the marsh and lay a log track so that the plane did not get stuck.

When everything was ready, the pilot perched his baby crane in the observer's compartment, stepped on the gas and took off successfully.

From the nearest station where he refueled his aircraft, he sent his detachment the following telegram: "All well. Flying with Crane. Meet."

The undecipherable telegram caused a commotion at headquarters. Nobody knew who Crane was (the telegrapher had spelt 'crane' with a capital by mistake). "It's most likely some important official from Moscow," said the chief of staff, "in any case we'd better give him an official welcome."

Captain Yermakov's plane was met in due form at the aerodrome. As soon as the aircraft could be seen in the sky, the superior officer on duty came out onto the runway and deferentially ran towards it as it bounced along the landing strip.

Yermakov's familiar face emerged from the cabin but there was no sign of any passengers on board.

Yermakov lifted up his goggles and smiled friendlily.

"Good day," he said, switching the engine off.

Saluting, the superior officer asked cautiously, "Where's Comrade Crane?"

"Comrade Crane?... He's right here in the cabin."

"Comrade Crane isn't feeling well, perhaps?" anxiously inquired the officer.

"Perhaps," replied the pilot, beaming.

The officer peered solicitously into the cabin where, strapped to the observer's seat, calmly sat a crane. Spotting the unexpected guest, the officer roared with laughter, "So that's the Crane you've brought us. All of us here were racking our brains, wondering anxiously if a new administration officer was coming with you. We thought he might be a stickler and decided to give him an official welcome."

The newly-arrived crane took up residence at the aerodrome. It soon got used to people and strutted grandly around the planes as they took off and landed. The new guest felt just as much at home at the aerodrome as on the marsh.

It liked its new life very much and started taking titbits from people's hands and ceased to be afraid of them. It stayed with the people working at the aerodrome day and night.

In autumn, as expected, the crane began learning to fly. Extending its neck, it would race along against the wind and lift off the ground like a plane and after circling the aerodrome, would carefully land again. Watching it fly, the pilots would say admiringly, "What a fine aviator our Vasily Ivanovich is!"

One day Vasily Ivanovich got more carried away than usual and flew off to a nearby marsh where it spent almost all day. Towards evening when the training flights were about to begin at the aerodrome, it heard the sound of starting engines and flew back at once. From then on it often flew to the marsh but always returned at the



sound of an engine. It was apparently its official duty to be present at the aerodrome when a plane took off.

In late autumn when the cranes were heading south, Vasily Ivanovich, I am told, became well and truly miserable. It would hail its feathered brothers crying plaintively in the sky in a similar manner and, beating its wings, would dash fretfully about the aerodrome. Hearing the sad cry of their stranded brother, the wild cranes sometimes broke their flying formation and circled over and over the aerodrome inviting it to join them on their distant journey but Vasily Ivanovich never ventured high in the sky.

A CAMP IN THE STEPPE*

Small wild geese landed on the steppe by the camp where they habitually fed, in grey flocks, filling the vicinity with loud gaggling. Through my binoculars I could see the birds feeding on the steppe, their arched necks and reddish breasts glowing in the rays of the morning sun rising over the estuary. In the morning isolated patches of mist drifted across the steppe from the vast estuary, the bird's dominion, which was then totally enveloped by a spectral misty shroud.

Unarmed, carrying only my binoculars, I trudged up the river bank which was overgrown with tall reeds. The river dries up in summer and the scorching silt on its bed is teeming with dirty tortoises. This is where the birds feed in winter when large fish are to be found. Waiting for a catch, like motionless sentries, the keen-eyed herons continuously keep watch on the river banks.

I walked across the steppe covered with last year's wiry grass and bare patches of salt-licks. A wolf's fresh trail ran in a long chain along the narrow path that had been trampled by the bank. At night the wolf would force its way to the collective farm's sheep and many times we heard the camp's leader rushing outside with his rifle and yelling

* English translation © Raduga Publishers 1982.

at the top of his voice into the darkness, "You bastard!... Be off with you!"

The wolves stealing out of the reeds feared neither the fierce dogs, barking frenziedly and rushing at them in the dark, nor the raucous shrieking, nor the futile firing of the rusty old rifle. A week beforehand a wolf had dug under the wall of the collective farm's lamb-pen and, grabbing the terror-stricken lambs and ewes by the legs, had crunched their bones in its terrible jaws. It had also managed to drag a ewe through the narrow tunnel it had burrowed under the wall. A handful of white sheep's wool on the river bank was the only sad evidence of the night's successful raid.

"Damn them!" cursed the camp's leader, rushing out in his underwear at night whenever the dogs barked furiously. Awoken by the din, we heard his cursing, the dry click of a bolt and the piercing sound of a shot. Encouraged by the blast, the dogs rushed unfearingly at the invisible enemy in the dark. We heard barking, whining and snarl and growl of a fight.

"Missed again, the thief's got away," angrily snapped our anxious host, returning and putting his rifle back in a corner.

From morning till late evening the camp resounded with the vibrant gaggling of wild geese migrating to their winter feeding grounds in large grey flocks and long narrow lines forming a patterned curtain in the sky. A visiting hunter experiences a strange sensation on hearing the familiar cry of a flock of birds. It is as if the birds are calling one to join them. Lowering my arms sadly, I watched the gaggles of geese flying overhead... Surely it was with the same nostalgia that we followed flocks of migrating cranes in our far-off childhood? I looked at the birds' stretched necks and listened to the flapping of their powerful wings and a succession of childhood memories came flooding back. I followed the birds' swift flight and an urge to travel, see and live filled me once again with glowing youthful strength...

BORIS



ZHITKOV

1882 1938

By the age of nine Zhitkov was already a brilliant swimmer and diver and would go all alone far out to sea in a boat. None of his playmates could tie naval knots, row, forecast the weather and identify insects and birds better or faster than him.

As a boy he dreamed of distant countries and voyages and his dreams came true. He toured the world over, took part in scientific expeditions and served as a navigation officer on long voyages. All the time he arduously and enthusiastically studied, mastered several professions, learnt foreign languages and studied engineering.

He did not set out to be a writer but he was famed among friends as a wonderful story-teller. They advised him to write down one of his entertaining stories and this eventually decided his fate.

Children at once took to his books about true courage and comradeship and all kinds of interesting things. Everything that Zhitkov wrote about, he had been lucky enough to see with his own eyes and do or experience for himself and this is why his stories are so fascinating and true to life.

Boris Zhitkov

THE POST*

In the north where the Nenets** live, even in spring when the snow has already melted everywhere, there are frosts and often heavy snow-storms.

One day in spring a Nenets postman had to take the post from one village to another nearby only thirty kilometres away.

The Nenets' very light sledges are drawn by reindeer which fly like the wind, faster than any horses.

The postman went out in the morning, looked at the sky, crumpled some snow in his fist and thought, "There's going to be a snow-storm this afternoon. If I harness up now, I'll get there before it starts."

He harnessed his four best reindeer, put on his hooded fur jacket and fur boots and picked up the long stick he used to urge the deer on.

He fastened the postbag securely to the sledge, jumped in, sat down sideways and drove the reindeer into a full gallop.

He was already driving out of the village when his sister suddenly came towards him, waving her arms and shouting for him to stop.

He felt annoyed but stopped all the same. His sister began asking him to take her daughter with him to her grandmother's.

"Hurry up!" shouted the postman. "A storm's coming."

But his sister took a long time feeding the little girl and getting her ready. The postman sat the girl down in front of him and the reindeer took flight but he also had to urge them on in order to beat the storm.

Half-way there a head-on wind whipped up. The sun was shining and the snow was sparkling when all of a sudden everything grew dark, the snow began whirling and even the front pair of reindeer were hidden from view.

The reindeer began getting stuck in the snow and came to a halt.

---

* English translation © Raduga Publishers 1982.

** A small northern people.–*Tr.*

The postman unharnessed them, stood the sledge upright, tied his long stick to it and fastened the girl's Young Pioneer tie to the tip of the stick. Then he dug a hole near the sledge, put the post-bag in it, made the reindeer lie down and huddled with the little girl against them. They were soon snow-bound but the postman dug an igloo-like cave under the snow where it was quiet and cosy.

And the people in the village where the postman was due saw that a storm was raging and that he had not arrived, and telephoned to find out if he had left. They all then realised he had been caught in the storm and waited for it to abate.

Next day the blizzard was still blowing but the snow was sweeping lower. It was impossible to go on reindeer to look for the postman because only an aerosledge could get through. An aerosledge looks like a little hut on runners and is driven along by an engine which turns a propeller similar to that of an aeroplane.

The doctor, the driver and two men with shovels got into the aero-sledge and drove along the road used by the postman.

Suddenly over the low blizzard they caught sight of a stick with a red tie flying like a flag above water.

They drove up, stopped and began digging out the postman, the little girl and the reindeer.

"Got any food?" asked the postman at once. "The child's crying."

"Yes, and it's even hot," replied the doctor and carried the little girl off to the aerosledge.

The blizzard abated while the postman and little girl were warming themselves.

THE LITTLE WHITE HOUSE*

We lived by the sea and my father had a very fine sailing boat. I was very good at rowing and sailing but nonetheless my father never let me go out to sea alone although I was already twelve.

* English translation © Raduga Publishers 1982.

One day my sister, Nina, and I found out that my father was going to be away from home for two days and we made up our minds to sail across to the other side of the bay where a lovely little white house with a red roof stood in a grove. We had never been there and decided it must be very good there. A kind old couple most likely lived in it and Nina said that they were bound to have a nice little dog as well. They most likely ate yoghurt and would be so pleased to see us that would give us some, too.

And so we began storing up bread and bottles for water because sea-water is salty, you see, and we might suddenly feel thirsty on the way.

As soon as father had left in the evening, we began pouring water into the bottles when mother was not looking because she was sure to ask what we were doing and then the game would be given away.

At day-break Nina and I slipped quietly out of a window and took our bread and bottles to the boat. I erected the sails and we went out to sea. I sat like a skipper and Nina carried out my orders like a sailor.

A gentle breeze was blowing and the waves were small and Nina and I felt as if we were on a big ship with supplies of food and water, sailing to another country. I steered straight towards the little house with the red roof and then ordered Nina to make breakfast. She broke off little bits of bread and opened a bottle of water. She had been sitting in the bottom of the boat all the time and when she stood up to serve me, she looked back at our shore and began screaming so loudly that I even startled.

"Oh, I can hardly see our house!" she said and was about to start howling.

"But we've almost reached the old folks' house, cry-baby," I replied. She looked ahead and bellowed even more loudly, "The old folks' house is still a long way off: we haven't got any closer to it but we've left our house far behind."

She began howling and I purposely started eating the bread as if nothing was the matter. As she roared, I kept repeating, "If you want to go back, jump overboard and swim home: I'm going to the old folks'."

Then she sipped from the bottle and fell asleep. I remained seated at the rudder and the wind continued to blow as gently as before from

the same direction. The boat ran smoothly along and the water babbled astern. The sun was already high in the sky.

And then I saw that we were getting very close to the other shore and the little house was plainly visible. If Nina were to wake up now and look, she would be so happy, I thought. I looked for the dog but neither it nor the old folk were anywhere to be seen.

All of a sudden the boat hit something, stopped and tilted sideways. I hurriedly lowered the sail so as not to capsize. Nina jumped up. Still half-asleep, she did not know where she was and looked round, rubbing her eyes.

"We've hit a sand bank and gone aground," I said. "I'll push us off in a jiffy. Look, there's the house!"

But instead of being happy to see the house, she became even more frightened. I took my clothes off, jumped into the water and began pushing.

I wore myself out but the boat did not budge an inch. I inclined it on one side and then the other and lowered the sails but nothing helped.

Nina began shouting for the old folk to come and help us but we were too far out and nobody appeared. I ordered Nina to jump out but this did not make the boat any lighter because it was well and truly stuck in the sand. I tried wading towards the shore but we were surrounded by deep water on all sides and were too far out to swim ashore.

And still nobody came out of the house. I ate some bread, swilled it down with water and ignored Nina, who was crying and saying over and over, "What a fine place to lay anchor, now none will find us here. Skipper, my foot! Mummy will go out of her mind. You'll see. Mummy said to me, you know, 'If anything ever happens to you two, I'll go out of my mind'."

But I kept silent. The wind had completely died down. Before I knew it, I had dozed off.

When I awoke it was pitch dark. Nina was curled up under the bench at the prow snivelling. I stood up and the boat rocked lightly and freely under my feet. I rocked it harder on purpose. The boat was at large. I was so happy that I whooped for joy! We had got off the sandbank. The wind had changed direction, the sea-level had risen and lifted the boat off the sandbank.



I looked round and saw lots of tiny sparks of light glimmering in the distance. This was our shore. I hurriedly hoisted the sails. Nina jumped up and at first thought that I had gone mad. However, I remained silent until I had set the boat on course for the lights and then said, "What's up, cry-baby? We're going home, aren't we? There's nothing to howl about."

We sailed all night. Towards morning the wind dropped but we were already near the shore. We rowed the rest of the way home. Mummy was both furious and overjoyed but we made her promise not to say anything to father.

And then we found out that nobody had lived in the little house for a whole year.



YEVGENY SHVARTS

(1896-1958)

The laughter and joy radiating from his stories, fairy-tales and plays accompanied Shvarts throughout his entire life. One can easily imagine why he was such a welcome guest at children's New Year parties and school gatherings. The children listened to him with bated breath. After all, it was not every day that they were lucky enough to meet someone who could make them roar with laughter and then gasp with surprise a moment later and so they would have been very sorry to miss anything.

Shvarts did not start off as a writer. As a young man he did some acting and worked as a journalist and only later in life began writing stories, fairy-tales and film scripts. His fairy-tales, however, were mainly intended to be recited or acted.

In keeping with the best traditions, his fairy-tales teach one to be good and wise, kind and brave and ready to do dangerous exploits for the sake of simple and honest people's happiness.

Yevgeny Shvarts

A TALE OF WASTED TIME*

There was once a boy named Petya Zubov. He was a third-grade pupil of School No. 14 and was the worst pupil in his class in grammar, in arithmetic and even in singing.

"I'll catch up," he said at the end of the first half of the first term. "I'll catch up with all of you by the end of the term."

Towards the end of the first term he put his hopes in the second term and so lagged behind again, and kept on being late, being late and lagging behind, and he had not a care in the world. He kept on saying: "I'll catch up."

One morning, when Petya was late as usual, he rushed into the cloakroom, slammed his books onto the counter and shouted, "Auntie Natasha! Here's my coat!"

The cloakroom attendant, whom the children all called Auntie Natasha, said from behind some coats, "Who is it?"

"It's me, Petya Zubov."

"Why's your voice so hoarse?"

"I don't know. It just suddenly got hoarse."

Auntie Natasha came forward, glanced at Petya and gasped. She frightened him.

"What's the matter, Auntie Natasha?" he said.

"The matter? You said you were Petya Zubov, but certainly, you must be his grandfather."

"I'm no grandfather. I'm Petya. I'm in the third grade."

"Well, then, have a look in the mirror."

Petya looked at himself in the mirror and nearly passed out. He saw that he'd turned into a tall, thin, pale old man. His face was all wrinkled. He stood there staring at himself in the mirror until at last his grey beard began to shake and he cried in a deep, hoarse voice: "Mama!" Then he dashed out.

* English translation © Raduga Publishers 1982.

As Petya ran along the street, he was saying to himself, "Well, if Mama doesn't recognise me, I'm sunk." When he reached his house he rang three times. His mother opened the door and stood there, looking at him in silence. Petya was silent, too. His grey beard jutted out, and he was very close to tears.

"Whom d'you wish to see?" his mother finally said.

"Don't you recognise me?" Petya whispered.

"I'm sorry, I don't."

Poor Petya turned away and stumbled out of the house. As he walked along the street, he was thinking: "I'm such a lonely, miserable old man. I've no mother, no children, no grandchildren, no friends. And, what's most important, I've had no time to learn anything. Real old men are either doctors, or workers, or academicians, or teachers. But what's the good of me, if I'm just a third-grade pupil? I won't even get a pension, because I've only worked for three years. And you can't even call that work, not with all the poor marks I got. What's going to become of me? Poor old me! What an unhappy child I am! How'll all this end?"

Such were Petya's reflections as he walked along, deep in thought. Before he knew it, he had walked far out of town and had reached a forest. He kept on through the forest until it became dark.

"I wish I could lie down and rest," Petya was just saying to himself when he spied a little hut glowing white in the distance behind the trees. Petya entered. There was no one inside. A table with a kerosene lamp suspended over it stood in the middle of the room. Four stools were set around it. A clock with a pendulum was ticking on the wall, and a pile of straw was heaped up in a corner. Petya lay down on the straw, pulled some up over him and felt warmer. He had a little cry, dabbed at his tears with his beard and fell asleep.

It was light in the room when Petya awoke. The kerosene lamp was lit. Two boys and two girls sat at the table, bent over a large copper-bound abacus*. The children were doing sums and mumbling.

"Two years, plus five, plus seven, plus three.... That's for me. These are yours, Olga. These are yours, Marfa, and these are yours, Pantelei."

---

* A counting frame.–*Tr.*

Who were these children? Why did they look so glum? Why did they groan and sigh like old men and women? And why were they here in this deserted hut in the woods in the middle of the night?

Petya tensed. He listened to their every word with bated breath, and what he heard terrified him.

These were no boys and girls sitting around the table, they were evil sorcerers!

This is what Petya discovered: a person who wastes time never notices that he is getting old. The evil sorcerers had discovered this secret and had begun hunting for and catching children who wasted time. That very day they had caught him, Petya, another boy and two girls, and had turned them all into old men and old women. The poor children had become old people and had not even noticed when the change had occurred, just as a person who wastes time never notices that he is getting old. Now all the time the children had wasted had been gathered up by the evil sorcerers, so that they had grown younger and become children, while the real children had become old men and old women.

What could be done?

What was he to do?

Couldn't their lost childhood and youth be returned to them?

The sorcerers counted up the time they had gained and were about to put the abacus back into the drawer, but Sergei, the chief sorcerer, told them to wait. He picked up the abacus and went over to the clock on the wall. He moved the hands, fiddled around with the weights, listened to the pendulum ticking and again cast some beads on the abacus. He went on doing sums, mumbling and whispering until the hands pointed to midnight. Then Sergei scrambled the beads and rechecked his answer. He called to the other sorcerers and said in an undertone: "I want you to know that the kids we turned into old people today still have a chance to get young again."

"How?" the others exclaimed.

"I'll tell you," Sergei replied and tiptoed out of the hut. He circled around it, came back inside, locked and bolted the door, and poked a stick into the pile of straw.

Petya was as still as a mouse. However, the kerosene lamp cast a dim light, and so the chief sorcerer did not notice him.

Sergei called the others over and continued to speak in an undertone. "Unfortunately," he said, "the world is made up in such a way that people can overcome their misfortunes. If the brats we turned into old people find each other tomorrow and come here on the stroke of midnight, and turn the hands of the clock seventy-seven times backward, they'll become kids again, and we'll perish."

For a while the sorcerers were silent.

Then Olga said, "But how'll they ever find out?"

"They'll never come here at midnight. And if they do, they're sure to be late, even if only by a minute," Pantelei muttered.

"Never! Not on your life! Those lazy kids won't never even be able to count up to seventy-seven. They'll get all muddled before they do," Marfa mumbled.

"You're right," Sergei agreed. "Still and all, though, keep your eyes open until then. If they find the clock and touch the hands, we'll be glued to the spot. Now let's not waste any time. We've got work to do."

The sorcerers put the abacus back in the drawer and ran off like children, groaning and sighing like real old men and women on the way.

Petya waited till their footsteps could no longer be heard in the forest. He rushed out of the hut. Without wasting a moment's time, he ran off as fast as he could, heading back to town to search for the three aged children.

The city was still asleep. The windows were dark, the streets were deserted. Soon dawn began to break. The first trolley-car bells rang out. Petya spotted an old woman carrying a large basket. He ran up to her and said.

"Can you please tell me if you're really a little girl?"

"What?" the old woman said sternly.

"Are you really in the third grade?" Petya whispered hesitantly.

The old woman stamped her foot. She was about to swing her basket at Petya, but he streaked off. After a while he caught his breath and continued on his way.

By now the city was wide awake. Trolley cars zipped back and forth, crowds of people hurried to work. Big trucks rumbled by, in a hurry to deliver their goods to the stores, factories and the railroad

yard. Janitors were shovelling snow and tossing handfuls of sand onto the pavement to keep the pedestrians from slipping and falling, and wasting their time. Petya had seen all this so many times before, but this was the first time he had actually understood why people were afraid to be late and not to be on time.

He looked around, trying to see if he could spot the aged children, but he could not. He could see a few elderly men and women, but they were all genuine elderly people, not aged children.

Here was a grey-haired man carrying a briefcase. He was probably a teacher. There was a grey-haired man carrying a pail and a long-handled brush. He was probably a house painter. There was a red fire engine, and sitting beside the driver was a grey-haired man, the city's fire chief. He certainly had never wasted a moment in his life.

Petya wandered up and down the streets, but nowhere did he see any young old people who were actually aged children. Life was swirling and rushing about. Of all the people on the street he alone had fallen behind, had been too late, had not been on time, was good for nothing and of no use to anyone.

At noon Petya came to a little square and sat down on a bench to rest. Suddenly he jumped up. There, on a bench nearby, was an old lady. She was weeping. He wanted to run over to her, but didn't dare. "I'll wait and see what happens," he said to himself.

Meanwhile, the old lady had stopped crying. She was swinging her legs. Then she took a magazine from one pocket and raisin bun from the other. When she opened up the magazine Petya was so pleased he jumped. It was a children's magazine! The old lady was now reading and eating, picking the raisins out of the bun and eating them, but not the bun. When she was through with reading she put the magazine and the bun back into her pockets. Then she seemed to notice something in the snow, bent down and picked up a ball. One of the children who had been playing in the square had probably lost it. The old lady examined it, wiped the snow off carefully with her handkerchief, got up, went over to a tree and began throwing the ball against the trunk and catching it.

Petya dashed headlong through the snow and bushes towards her, shouting as he ran, "Granny! I know you're a little girl!"



The old lady jumped for joy. She grabbed Petya's hand and said, "Yes, I am! I'm in the third grade. My name's Marusya Pospelova. Who're you?"

Petya told Marusya all about what had happened. They took hands and ran off to find the two other missing children. An hour passed, and another, and a third, and still they searched. At last, coming to a big house, they saw an old lady jumping about in the yard. She was playing hopscotch all by herself. Petya and Marusya ran towards her.

"Granny! Are you really a little girl?" he asked.

"I'm in the third grade," the old lady replied. "My name's Nadya Sokolova. Who're you?"

So Petya and Marusya told her all about what had happened. Now the three of them took hands and ran off in search of the missing boy. He was nowhere to be found. No matter where the three aged children looked, in the yards, in the parks, in children's theatres, in children's movie houses and even in the Fun Science House, the boy seemed to have vanished into thin air.

The hours were slipping away. It was beginning to get dark. Lights were going on in the houses. Day was drawing to a close. What were they to do? Were they doomed forever?

All of a sudden Marusya shouted, "Look! Look!"

Petya and Nadya looked, and this is what they saw: the No. 9 trolley car was speeding away. Hanging on in back, catching a ride, was a little old man. His fur hat was set on his head at a rakish angle and his beard was streaming in the wind. The little old man was whistling as he rode along. Here they were, ready to drop from exhaustion after having spent so much time looking for him, while he was hitching rides with not a care in the world.

They dashed after the trolley car. Luckily, the lights changed at the crossing just then and it stopped. The children grabbed hold of the old man's coat and pulled him off the car.

"Are you a schoolboy?" Petya asked.

"Sure, I am. I'm in the second grade. My name's Vasya Zaitsev. What's the matter?"

So they told him all about what had happened. Then, in order not to waste any more time, the four of them boarded the same trolley and rode off out of town to the forest.

There were some other schoolchildren in the trolley. They all got up to offer the four old people their seats. "Won't you sit down?" they said.

The four old people looked embarrassed. They turned red and refused the offer, but the other children were very polite and well brought up. They would not take no for an answer. "Do sit down! You've worked hard all your lives and you're tired. So do sit down and rest."

Fortunately, the trolley reached the woods just then. The four aged children jumped off and ran into the thicket. But now a new misfortune awaited them, for they soon lost their way. A dark black night enveloped them. The four old people wandered around in the woods, tripping and falling. They could not find the path that led to the sorcerers' hut.

"Oh, time's slipping away so quickly," Petya said. " It's just flying. I didn't pay any attention to the path leading out of the woods yesterday, because I didn't want to waste any time. Now I see it's sometimes better to lose a little time so as to save a lot of it later."

The old children were all in. But then the wind began to blow, clearing the sky of clouds. A full moon shone down upon them. Petya climbed a tree and spotted the hut. Its walls gleamed white just a few feet away, and the light in the window could be seen behind the dense fir trees.

Petya climbed down. "Shh! Not a word out of you! Follow me!" he whispered.

The aged children crawled through the snow to the hut. They peeped into the window. The hands of the clock on the wall pointed to five minutes to twelve. The sorcerers were lying on the straw, saving the time they had stollen.

"They're asleep!" Marusya said.

"Shh!" Petya hissed.

They opened the door softly and crept towards the clock. At one minute to midnight they stood up in front of it. On the stroke of midnight Petya reached out for the hands. *One, two, three*, he began turning the clock back.

The sorcerers jumped up and cried out, but they could not move. They were glued to the spot and were growing bigger and bigger. In a

few moments they had become grown men and women. Their hair was turning grey. Their faces were becoming wrinkled.

"Pick me up!" Petya shouted. "I'm getting smaller! I can't reach the hands! *Thirty-one, thirty-two, thirty-three*...."

Petya's friends picked him up. At the fortieth turn of the hands the sorcerers became feeble, bent old men and women. They kept bending lower and lower. Then, at the seventy-seventh and last turn, the evil sorcerers shrieked and vanished, just as if they had never existed at all.

The children looked at each other and laughed. They were themselves again. It had taken a lot of courage and perseverance, but they had accomplished a miracle: they had got back all the time they had wasted.

They were saved, but never forget that a person who wastes time never notices that he is getting old.

Nikolai
1908 / NOSOV / *1976*

Nosov's first book of children's stories *Peck-Peck-Peck* was published almost forty years ago. A year later came the book *Steps* with which the talented writer stepped into the life of millions of enthralled young readers.

Children at once became friends with Nosov's heroes. They could hardly not want to get acquainted with the resourceful and ingenious boys and girls in his books *Story-Teller, Telephone, Visiting Grandpa, The Lively Family* and *Misha's Porridge.*

Nosov's stories radiate goodness, kindness, joyful laughter and gaiety. However, "gaiety" and "frivolity" are not synonymous, as some tend to think. Nosov's stories are proof of this. While entertaining they make one think seriously and help children to be good, honest, brave and generous.



Nikolai Nosov

VISITING GRANDPA*

Shurik and I spent last summer visiting Grandpa. Shurik is my kid brother. I was seven and already at school, but he wasn't. Still, he never obeys me. Well, I don't care. The day we arrived we explored the yard, the sheds and the attic. I found an empty jam jar and an empty box of shoe polish. Shurik found an old door-pull and a big galosh. Then we nearly had a fight over a fishing rod in the attic. I saw it first and shouted, "That's mine!"

Then Shurik saw it and he shouted, "It's mine!"

I grabbed one end, he grabbed the other and we pulled. I got so mad I yanked it hard and he tumbled over backwards. Then he said, "Who needs your old rod? I have my galosh."

"You can kiss your lovely galosh, but don't you dare touch my rod again."

I found a spade in the shed and went off to dig worms, for I had decided to go fishing. Shurik went to ask Grandma for some matches.

"What do you want them for?" she demanded.

"I want to make a fire in the yard. Then I'll put the galosh on top of the fire and when it melts it'll be rubber."

"What will you think of next! Why, you'll burn the house down if I don't keep an eye on you. No, my dear, don't even ask me for them. Children should never play with matches. Imagine such mischief!"

So Shurik tied one end of a piece of string to the door-pull and the other to his galosh. He marched up and down the yard, dragging the galosh along. When he came over to me and saw me digging for worms he said, "You're wasting your time. You won't catch anything anyway."

"Why not?"

"I'll put a spell on the fish."

"Don't scare me," I sneered.

* English translation © Progress Publishers 1975.



I dug some worms, put them in a box and went off to the pond. The pond was behind the house, where the collective farm's gardens began. I put a worm on my hook, cast my line and sat down to wait for a bite. Shurik crept on me. Suddenly, he began yelling at the top of his voice: *Be he alive, or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to make my bread!*

I decided not to say anything, because I knew that if I did, it would only make him shout louder. He finally got tired of shouting his evil spell and tossed his galosh into the water. Then he pulled it up by the string. Then he threw the galosh into the pond and tried hitting it with stones in order to sink it.

For a moment or two I didn't say a word. Then I hollered, "Get out of here! You've scared all my fish away!"

"You won't catch anything anyway. I put a spell on them." And he tossed his galosh into the middle of the pond.

I jumped up and grabbed a stick. Shurik ran off, with the galosh dancing along crazily behind him. He was lucky I didn't catch him.

I went back to the pond and sat down to fish again. The sun was high overhead by then and I still hadn't had a single bite. What was wrong with those fish? I was so mad at Shurik I could have beat his brains out. I didn't believe in his spell, but I knew that if I came home empty-handed he'd laugh at me. I tried everything: casting far into the pond and close to the bank, sinking my hook deeper into the water, but nothing helped. Finally, I decided to go home. Besides, I was very hungry.

There was a great hammering at our gate.

When I got closer I saw it was Shurik, hammering the door-pull to the gate. I don't know where he had got the hammer and nails. "Why are you nailing this here?"

He was happy to see me. "Ah, the fisherman's back! Where's your catch?" he asked and giggled.

"Why are you nailing this to the gate? There is a handle here."

"So what? Now there'll be two. In case one comes off."

When he was all through hammering he had one nail left. He couldn't decide what to do with it. At first, he wanted to drive it into the fence. Then he got a better idea. He held his galosh to the gate with the sole against the wood and nailed it there.

"What's that for?"

"Nothing special."

"That's stupid."

Then we saw Grandpa coming home for lunch. Shurik was scared. He tried to pull the galosh off the gate, but it was nailed fast. Then he stood in front of it, to hide it from view. Grandpa came up to us and said, "Good for you, boys! You've got down to work your very first day. Whose idea was it to nail another handle to the gate?"

"Shurik's," I said.

Grandpa cleared his throat. "Well, now we'll have two handles on the gate, one higher up, the other lower down, so that when a very short person comes calling he can pull the bottom one." Then he noticed the galosh. "What's this?"

I snorted, knowing that Shurik was in for it. Shurik turned red. He didn't know what to say.

"What's this, a mailbox?" Grandpa asked. "If the mailman comes round and sees nobody's home he can put our letters in the galosh. That's a very clever idea."

"I thought of it myself."

"Indeed?"

"Honest!"

"Good for you."

All during lunch Grandpa kept telling Grandma what a smart fellow Shurik was.

"It's really amazing. We'd never have thought of it. Imagine, he nailed a galosh to the gate! I've been saying we needed a mailbox, but never got around to it."

"I can take a hint. I'll get us a mailbox," Grandma said. "Meanwhile, the galosh can serve as one."

After lunch Shurik ran off to the orchard. Grandpa said to me, "Shurik has really been busy this morning. I'm sure you were up to something, too, Kolya. You might as well confess and make your Grandpa happy."

"I went fishing, but I didn't catch anything."

"Where'd you go?"

"To the pond."

"No wonder. They've just dug it. I don't even think there are frogs in it yet. I'll tell you what. You go down to the river. The current is fast

under the wooden bridge. That's where you fish." Grandpa went back to work. I got my rod and said to Shurik:

"Let's go down to the river to fish."

"You're trying to make up to me, aren't you?"

"What for?"

"So I won't put any more spells on the fish."

"I couldn't care less."

I took my box of worms and the empty jam jar for my fish and set off. Shurik tagged along behind. When we got to the river I found a good spot near the bridge and cast my line.

Shurik stayed close to me, mumbling,

Be he alive, or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to make my bread!

He'd be still for a few moments and then start in again,

Be he alive, or be he dead....

Suddenly, I had a bite. I yanked at the line. The fish glittered in the air, slipped off the hook and fell wriggling into the grass at the very edge of the bank.

"Catch it!" Shurik yelled and threw himself on the fish. It slipped away and was thrashing about at the water's edge. Shurik finally got hold of it. I filled the jar with water and he dropped the fish in.

"It's a perch," he said as he examined it. "I'm sure it is. See the lines on it? Can it be mine?"

"All right. We'll catch a lot more."

We fished for hours that day and caught six little perches, four gudgeons and one small ruff. On the way home Shurik carried the jar of fish. He wouldn't let me hold it. He was so proud he never minded his galosh missing from the gate. There was a shiny green mailbox in its place.

"Who cares?" he said. "And anyway, the mailbox is nicer." Then he ran off to show Grandma the fish. She was very pleased.

After a while I said to Shurik, "See, your magic spell didn't work. It's not worth much, is it? And I don't believe in it."

"I don't either. You have to be real dumb to believe in magic. Or very old."

This made Grandma laugh, because she was very old, but she didn't believe in magic spells, either.

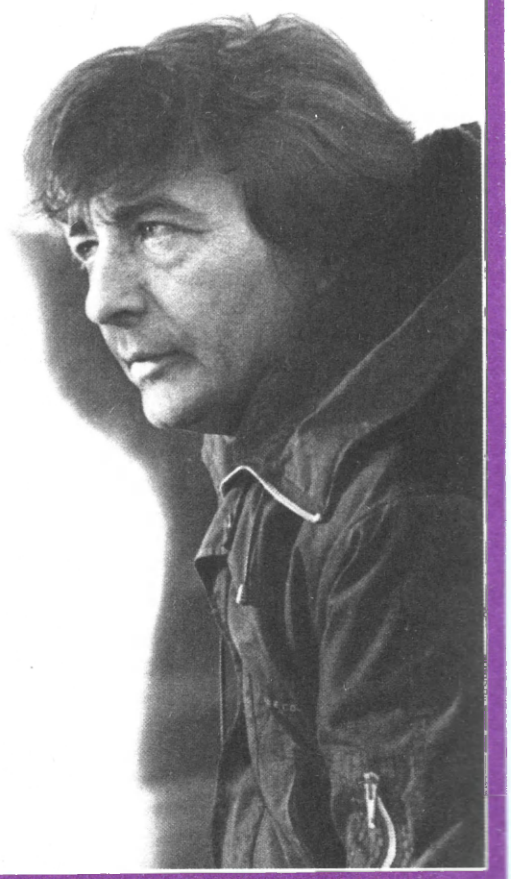
EDUARD USPENSKY

(1939)

After graduating from the Moscow Aviation Institute, Uspensky became an engineer. However, he always very much enjoyed playing with children and during the summer all the neighbourhood's youngsters aged between four and ten would come to his country cottage and have a whale of a time inventing games and amusing short stories and composing rhymes and songs. Uspensky gradually came to the conclusion that his real vocation was as a children's writer.

The writer soon became highly acclaimed with the publication of his book *Gena the Crocodile and His Friends*. The book's heroes Gena the crocodile, Cheburashka, a little animal of an unknown species, and an old woman by the name of Shapoklyak at once began a fascinating new life on television and cinema screens and their voices boomed out from the radio and records. They brought great pleasure to children.

Next appeared the fairy-tales *Uncle Fedor and His Dog and Cat* and *Down the Magic River* and others. And although all sorts of amazing things happen in these books, children know exactly what is going on because they have simply joined in a very interesting game with the heroes.



Eduard Uspensky

BOBBY THE GUN DOG*

Once upon a time in a certain town there lived Professor Ivanov, a very good man who studied wild animals' language. This professor had a gun dog called Bobby and they talked to each other like equals. When the dog was fully grown, he began pestering his master with requests: "Buy me a gun because I'm bored. There are no thieves and I'm ashamed to chase cats. And, speaking the truth, hunting is my vocation in life."

On the dog's birthday his master bought him a gun, some cartridges and a hunting bag.

"Congratulations, Bobby! Here's a gun for you. Shoot as much as you like."

He took Bobby to his country cottage where he could live and hunt.

Next morning Bobby woke up and didn't have anything for breakfast because dogs aren't fed before a hunt.

"I'll shoot something nice today for supper."

He took his hunting bag and bandolier, slung his gun on and went into the wood. He saw a hare sitting in a glade, tilted his gun and began stalking it. "Any moment now I'll let rip on it!" he thought. But the hare took flight and Bobby raced after it.

He ran as far as a narrow stream and saw the hare leap across it and race away on the other side. He clenched his gun between his jaws and tore after it. But the gun was heavy and pulled the hunter under the water. Bobby saw that he had sunk to the bottom.

"This is more like fishing than hunting," he thought.

He let go of the gun and tried in vain to swim to the surface. His hunting bag had got caught on a snag. At that very moment someone pulled him up and dragged him out of the water. A beaver muttered: "As if I've got nothing better to do than drag various dogs out of the water. If you can't swim, don't come near water!"

* English translation © Raduga Publishers 1982.

"But I didn't ask you to rescue me," retorted the dog. "For all you know, I could be doing some underwater swimming and training to be a diver."

Bobby was in a bad way. He lay in the sun for two hours, coming to his senses and wondering anxiously: "I went out hunting for wild animals and ended up being rescued from trouble by a beaver. What went wrong?"

He came home feeling absolutely miserable. Then his master, Professor Ivanov, arrived.

"Why are you so sad, Bobby?" he asked.

And Bobby replied: "My grandmother, my grandfather and all my uncles and aunts were gun dogs. I've got a trunk full of medals to prove it. But I just don't feel like hunting."

And he told his master how a beaver had dragged him out of the stream. His master thought for a while and said: "How about making you a guard dog?"

Bobby simply shrugged his shoulders and said: "You can make me a scarecrow for all I care."

So Bobby began guarding the local collective farm's vegetable garden and its carrots, cabbages, turnips and parsnips. But he made a bad job of it. Wherever he spotted a hare eating a cabbage at the other end of the garden, he would tilt his gun and race after it. He was a gun dog, you see. But what could he do with the hare if he caught it up? It was a pity to shoot it but he was also reluctant to let it go. That would mean he had chased it for nothing, wouldn't it? So he would take the hare home. He soon had a house full of hares. But what could he feed them on? Cabbages from the vegetable garden? No, it was his job to guard them, after all.

Bobby wrote a letter to his master: "Dear Master! I'm done for! The weather's fine but I'm a bad guard. I long for the wood all the time. Instead of guarding the vegetable plot, I chase after hares. Think of something quick!"

His master came up with another idea.

"Bobby, have you heard about wild life photography? I'll buy you a camera and you can take pictures of wild animals."

"Hurrah!" cried Bobby.

A new life began for him. He would take his camera into the wood

and when he spotted a hare, he would race after it, take its picture and rush home to develop the film. The next day he would make after the hare again, and give it the photos. The hares were afraid of him at first but then began coming with all their family to his home. It was just like running a photographer's studio. Then Bobby paid a visit to the beaver.

"Hello, my busy friend!" he said. "I'd like to take your photo."

"I've no time," replied the beaver. "I'm building a dam."

"Go ahead and build your Beaver Hydro Electric Power Station and take no notice of me."

And he photographed the beaver and all his family at work. The photo turned out to be very good. When Professor Ivanov saw it, he exclaimed joyfully: "I say, Bobby! Well done!"

He gave the photograph into the journal *Hunting and Fishing* and wrote a long article about Bobby in which he wrote about how wild animals should be photographed instead of hunted.

Since then many hunters have put down their guns and taken up photography. And my advice to you, children, is to throw away your catapults and ask your parents to buy you a camera. Good luck!

GENA THE CROCODILE AND HIS FRIENDS*

(An excerpt from the book)

Once upon a time, in the town where Cheburashka found himself, there lived a crocodile by the name of Gena. Each morning he woke up in his little flat, washed, had breakfast and set off for work at the zoo where he worked as a crocodile.

On arrival he undressed, hung his suit, hat and cane on a nail and lay down in the sun by the pool. A plaque with the following inscription hung on his cage:

* English translation © Raduga Publishers 1982.

Gena the African crocodile, aged fifty.
Feeding and stroking allowed.

At the end of his working day, Gena dressed carefully and walked home to his little flat. At home he read the newspapers, smoked a pipe and played noughts and crosses against himself all evening.

One day after he had lost the fortieth game in a row against himself, he became very sad indeed.

"Why am I always alone?" he wondered. "I really must make some friends." And he took a pencil and wrote the following advertisement:

A young crocodial, aged fifty,
wishes to make some friends.
Apply to:
Block 2, App. 15. Big Pie Street.
Ring three and a half times.

That same evening he hung the notices around the town and began waiting.

☆ ☆ ☆

Late the next evening someone rang at his door. A small, very serious little girl was standing in the doorway.

"In your advertisement," she said, "there are no less than three mistakes."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Gena, who thought that there were at least eighteen. "What are they?"

"First of all, 'crocodile' is spelt 'd-i-l-e', and, secondly, how can you be considered young if you're fifty?"

"But crocodiles live for three hundred years, so that's why I'm still very young," objected Gena.

"All the same, you must spell correctly. Let's get acquainted. My name's Galya. I work at the children's theatre."

"I'm Gena. I work at the zoo as a crocodile."

"And what shall we do now?"

"Nothing. Let's just have a chat."

But at that moment the door-bell rang again.

"Who's there?" asked the crocodile.

"It's me, Cheburashka!" And a strange-looking animal walked

into the room. It was brown and had huge goggling eyes and a short furry tail.

"Who might you be?" asked Galya.

"Don't know," replied the guest.

"You haven't a clue?" asked the little girl.

"Not a clue..."

"You're not a bear cub by any chance?"

"Don't know," said Cheburashka. "Perhaps I am."

"No," the crocodile joined in, "he's not even a bit like a bear cub. Bears have small eyes but just look what huge ones he's got!"

"Well, perhaps he's a puppy?" pondered Galya.

"Perhaps," agreed the guest. "But do puppies climb trees?"

"No, they don't," replied Galya. "They prefer barking."

"How?"

"Like this: woof! woof!" barked the crocodile.

"No, I can't do that," said Cheburashka sadly. "That means I'm not a puppy!"

"I know who you are," Galya said again, "most likely a leopard."

"Most likely," agreed Cheburashka. It made no difference to him. "Yes, I'm most likely a leopard."

Neither of them had ever seen a leopard and so they stepped back a little just in case.

"Let's look up in the dictionary," suggested Galya. "All words under any letter you like are explained there."

(I'll explain what a dictionary is, children, in case you don't know. It's a special book which contains every word in the world and tells you what each of them means.)

"Yes, let's look in the dictionary," agreed Cheburashka. "But which letter will you look under?"

"Under 'RRRRRRO'," said Galya, "because leopards RRRRROAR."

"And under 'B'," added Gena, "because leopards B-B-ITE."

Of course, Galya and Gena were both wrong because you should look for 'leopard' under 'L' and not 'RRRRRRO' or 'B'.

You see, he's a LEOPARD and not a RRRRRREOPARD and certainly not a B–EOPARD.



"But I don't roar and I don't bite," said Cheburashka, "so I'm not a leopard!..."

He then turned to the crocodile again:

"Tell me, if you don't find out who I am, you won't make friends with me?"

"Why?" replied Gena. "It all depends on you. If you prove a good fellow, we'll gladly be friends with you. Right?" he asked the little girl.

"Of course!" agreed Galya. "We'll be very pleased to!"

"Hurrah!" cried Cheburashka, "hurrah!" and leapt almost as high as the ceiling.

☆ ☆ ☆

"And what are we going to do now?" asked Cheburashka after they all had become acquainted.

"Let's play noughts and crosses," said Gena.

"No," said Galya, "better still, let's organise a handicraft club."

"But I haven't got hands!" objected Cheburashka.

"Neither have I," the crocodile seconded him. "I've only got feet."

"Perhaps we should organise a feetcraft club?" suggested Cheburashka.

"Or a tailcraft club?" added the crocodile.

"But I, unfortunately, don't have a tail," said Galya.

They all fell silent.

Then Cheburashka looked at the little alarm clock on the table.

"It's quite late, you know. It's time for us to be getting along." He certainly did not wish for his new friends to think him a nuisance.

"Yes," agreed the crocodile. "It really is time for us to be getting along!"

He, in fact, didn't have to go anywhere but, you see, he felt very sleepy.

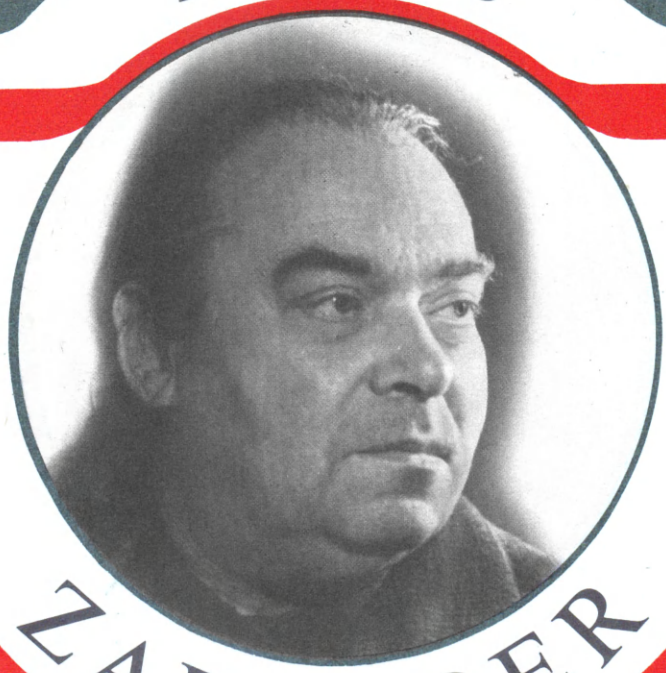
That night Gena slept as peacefully as ever.

Cheburashka, on the other hand, had a restless night. He simply could not believe that he had met such friends.

He tossed and turned in bed for a long time, jumped up every now and then and, deep in thought, paced up and down his small telephone booth.

TINU PUBLC
LIBRARY
Ref. No.....

BORIS ZAKHODER



1918

Zakhoder's favourite childhood hobby was inventing stories, riddles and rhymes. He was also very fond of animals and always kept a pet. He was ready to stand up for any cat or dog and, if needs be, take on a whole gang of boys and although he got a good thrashing in these skirmishes, he never gave up.

Zakhoder's poems and stories have been highly popular among children and adults for many years.

Cheerful and kind by nature, Zakhoder generously shares his high spirits in his works: "For when our children laugh, the world at once becomes a brighter place," he once wrote in one of his poems.

And generally speaking, the main intention of all his stories, fairy-tales and verses is to make children smile and feel happy and draw them into the wonderful world of fantasy in which mischievous make-believe is interwoven with reality and all sorts of miraculous things happen.

Boris Zakhoder

LITTLE GREY STAR*

"Well now," said Daddy Hedgehog, "this story is called 'Little Grey Star' but you can't possibly guess what it's about by its name. So listen carefully and don't interrupt. All questions later."

"But are stars really ever grey?" asked Baby Hedgehog.

"If you interrupt me once more, I won't tell you the story," replied Daddy Hedgehog but noticing that his little son was going to cry, said more kindly, "No, they aren't usually, although this seems odd to me as grey is a most beautiful colour. But there was one Little Grey Star.

"So then, once upon a time there was an ugly, clumsy toad, which also reeked of garlic, and had warts instead of spikes, all over him. Can you imagine that?! Uggh!

"Fortunately, he knew neither that he was so ugly nor that he was a toad. Firstly, because he was very tiny and didn't know much anyway, and secondly, because nobody had ever called him a toad. He lived in a garden where Trees, Bushes and Flowers grew, and you must know that Trees, Bushes and Flowers only speak to those very dear to them. And you wouldn't call someone you loved very, very much a toad, would you?"

Baby Hedgehog sniffed his consent.

"Well now, the Trees, Bushes and Flowers loved the toad very much and that's why they called him by the most affectionate names. Especially the Flowers."

"But why did they love him so much?" asked Baby Hedgehog very quietly.

Daddy Hedgehog frowned and Baby Hedgehog curled up at once.

"You'll soon find out if you keep quiet," Daddy Hedgehog frowned and continued, "When the toad appeared in the garden, the Flowers asked his name, and then he replied that he didn't know, they were very happy."

* English translation © Raduga Publishers 1982.

"'Oh, how wonderful!' exclaimed the Pansies (they spotted him first). 'Then we'll think up one for you! If you like, we'll call you ... we'll call you Pansy?'

"'Daisy sounds better,' chimed in the Daisies. 'It's a much prettier name!'

"Then the Roses intervened with the suggestion that he should be called Beauty; the Bluebells demanded he be called Ting-a-ling (as this was the only word they could say) and the Marigolds proposed Goldie."

Baby Hedgehog chuckled and then glanced timidly at his father but Daddy Hedgehog wasn't angry because Baby Hedgehog was rightly amused. He calmly continued, "In short, they would never have stopped arguing if it hadn't been for the Asters and the Wise Starling.

"'Let him be called Astra,' said the Asters.

"'Or, better still, Little Star,' said the Wise Starling. 'It means the same as Astra, only it's simpler. What's more, he really does look like a little star: just look what sparkling eyes he's got! And as he's grey, you can call him Little Grey Star, then there won't be any confusion! That's clear, isn't it?'

"And everyone agreed with the Wise Starling because he was very clever and could say several real human words and whistle almost a whole tune, which was about a famous Hedgehog, if I'm not mistaken. That's why people had built him a little home in a poplar.

"Since then everyone started calling the toad Little Grey Star. Everyone, that is, except the Bluebells who went on calling him Ting-a-ling as this was the only word they could say.

"'Star, my foot!' hissed a fat old Slug, creeping onto a rose bush and slithering towards its tender young leaves. 'Fine star he is! Why, he's a most ordinary-looking grey...'

"He was about to say 'toad' but didn't have time, because at that very moment Little Grey Star fixed its sparkling eyes on it and the Slug vanished.

"'Thank you, dear Little Star,' said the Rose, who had blanched with fear. 'You've rescued me from a terrible enemy!'

"And you ought to know," explained Daddy Hedgehog, "that Flowers, Trees and Bushes also have enemies, although they don't do

anyone any harm, on the contrary, they only do good! Lots of them! But it's a good thing that these enemies of theirs are quite nice to eat!"

"You mean, Little Star gobbled up the fat Slug?" asked Baby Hedgehog, licking his lips in anticipation.

"Most likely," said Daddy Hedgehog. "Although I can't be sure. Nobody actually saw Little Star eat the Slugs, Beastly Beetles and Catty Caterpillars. But all the Flowers' enemies vanished as soon as Little Star fixed his sparkling eyes on them. And they vanished for good and ever since Little Grey Star settled in the garden, the Trees, Flowers and Bushes began to enjoy life much more. Especially the Flowers because the Birds protected the Bushes and Trees from their enemies but the Flowers had nobody because they were too low for the Birds."

"That's why the Flowers loved Little Grey Star so much. They bloomed joyfully every morning when he came into the garden. All you could hear was: 'Come to us, Little Star!' 'No, to us first!' 'To us!'

"The Flowers spoke most affectionately to him, thanking and praising him to the skies but Little Grey Star kept modestly silent, for he was very, very modest, and only his eyes continued sparkling.

"A Magpie, which liked eavesdropping on humans' conversations, once even asked if it was true that he had a precious stone in its head which explained why his eyes sparkled so brightly!

"'I don't know,' said Little Grey Star confusedly. 'I don't think so...'

"'Well I never, Magpie! What a chatterbox you are!' said the Wise Starling. 'Not a stone but a muddle and it's in your head, not Little Star's! Little Grey Star's eyes sparkle because he's got a clear conscience. He's doing Useful Work, you see! That's clear, isn't it?'"

"Daddy, may I ask a question?" asked Baby Hedgehog.

"Ask all your questions afterwards."

"Oh, please, Daddy, just one!"

"Alright, just one."

"Daddy are we... are we useful?"

"Very," said Daddy Hedgehog. "Don't you worry about that. But listen to what happened next."

"So, as I've already said, the Flowers knew that Little Grey Star was good, kind and useful. The Birds knew it, too, and so did, of

course, People, especially Clever People. And only the Flowers' enemies wouldn't agree with this. 'Horrid, nasty thing!' they hissed, of course, when Little Star was out of ear-shot. 'Ugly, filthy little beast!' squeaked the Beastly Beetles. 'We've got to get even with him!' seconded the Catty Caterpillars. 'We simply can't get any peace with him around!'

"True, nobody paid any attention to their curses and threats, and what's more, the number of enemies gradually dwindled but unfortunately, the Nettle Butterfly, the Caterpillars' cousin, joined in the war. Although quite harmless and even rather pretty to look at, it was, in fact, terribly spiteful. Such is often the case.

"Oh, and I forgot to say that Little Grey Star never touched Butterflies."

"Why?" asked Baby Hedgehog. "Aren't they nice to eat?"

"That's got nothing to do with it, dafty. Most likely because Butterflies look like Flowers, and, you see, Little Star loved Flowers very much! And it probably didn't know that Butterflies and Caterpillars are almost one and the same. Caterpillars, you know, turn into Butterflies and Butterflies then hatch new Caterpillars...

"So, the cunning Nettle Butterfly devised a crafty plan to destroy Little Grey Star.

"'I'll soon rescue you from this revolting toad!' she said to her Caterpillar Cousins and Beetle and Slug friends and then flitted out of the garden.

"And she returned being chased by a Very Silly Little Boy waving a cap in his hand, with which he thought he was going to catch the pretty Butterfly at any moment.

"But the cunning Butterfly only pretended she was about to be caught: she landed on a flower, as if not noticing the Very Silly Little Boy, and then suddenly took wing right in front of his nose and flew to the next flower-bed.

"And she thus lured the Very Silly Little Boy into the heart of the garden, to the very path where Little Grey Star was sitting and chatting to the Wise Starling.

"The Butterfly was at once punished for her mean trick because the Wise Starling streaked down from the branch and snatched her in

his beak. But it was already too late because the Very Silly Little Boy had spotted Little Grey Star.

"'A toad, a toad!' he shrieked in a very silly voice. 'Oooh, how disgusting! Beat the toad! Beat it!'

"Little Grey Star didn't realize at first whom he was speaking about. Nobody, you see, had ever called him toad. He froze and then the Very Silly Little Boy aimed a stone at him.

"'Little Star, run!' screeched the Wise Starling in despair and almost choked on the Butterfly.

"At that moment a heavy stone crashed onto the ground near Little Grey Star. Fortunately, the Very Silly Little Boy had missed, and Little Grey Star managed to jump aside. The Flowers and Grass hid him from view but the Very Silly Little Boy didn't give up. He gathered a few more stones and started chucking them towards the swaying Grass and Flowers.

"'Toad! Poisonous toad!' he yelled. 'Beat the filthy brute!'

"'Little fool! Little fool!' screeched the Wise Starling at him. 'Why are you so muddle-headed? But he's useful, he is! That's a fact.'

"But the Very Silly Little Boy grabbed a stick and climbed into the middle of the Rose Bush where he thought Little Grey Star was hiding.

"The Rose Bush pricked him with her sharp spikes as hard as she could and the Very Silly Little Boy rushed out of the garden, howling."

"Hurrah!" cried Baby Hedgehog.

"Yes, dear, spikes are a good thing to have!" continued Daddy Hedgehog. "If Little Grey Star had had spikes, he probably wouldn't have had to cry so bitterly that day. But, as you know, he didn't have spikes and that's why he sat under the Rose Bush's roots and wept very bitterly indeed.

"'He called me a toad,' he sobbed, 'a filthy brute! That's what Person said, and, after all, People know absolutely everything! That means, I'm a toad, a toad!...'

"Everyone did all they could to comfort him: the Pansies said that he would always remain their dear little Grey Star; the Roses said that beauty wasn't the most important thing in life (which was a big sacrifice on their part). 'Don't cry, Goldie,' seconded the Marigolds,



and the Bluebells murmured 'Ting-a-ling, Ting-a-ling', which also sounded very comforting.

"But Little Grey Star was crying so bitterly that he couldn't hear the words of comfort. That's always the case when one starts consoling too early. The Flowers didn't know this but the Wise Starling did only too well. He let Little Grey Star have a good cry and then said: 'I'm not going to comfort you, my dear. All I'll say is this: there's nothing in a name. And, in any case, it doesn't matter at all what some Silly Muddle-Headed Little Boy says about you! To all your Friends, you were and always will be Little Grey Star. That's clear, isn't it?'

"And he began whistling a tune about... about a famous Hedgehog to cheer Little Grey Star up and show that he considered the conversation over.

"Little Grey Star stopped crying.

"'You're right, of course, dear Starling,' he said. 'Of course, there's nothing in a name... But all the same... all the same I don't think I'll come into the garden in the daytime any more so as... so as not to meet anyone silly...'

"And from that day on Little Grey Star, and all his brothers, sisters, children and grandchildren came into the garden to their Useful Work only at night."

Daddy Hedgehog cleared his throat and said: "And now you can ask questions."

"How many?" asked Baby Hedgehog.

"Three," replied his father.

"Oh! Then... my first is: is it true that Stars, I mean, toads don't eat Butterflies, or is this only make-believe?"

"It's true."

"And the Very Silly Little Boy said that toads are poisonous. Is this true?"

"It's rubbish! Of course, I wouldn't advise you to put them in your mouth but they're not at all poisonous."

"And is it true... Is this already my third question?"

"Yes, it is. That's all."

"What do you mean 'that's all'?"

"What I said. You see, you've already asked it. Your question was: 'Is this already my third question?'"

"Oh, Daddy, you're always teasing me."

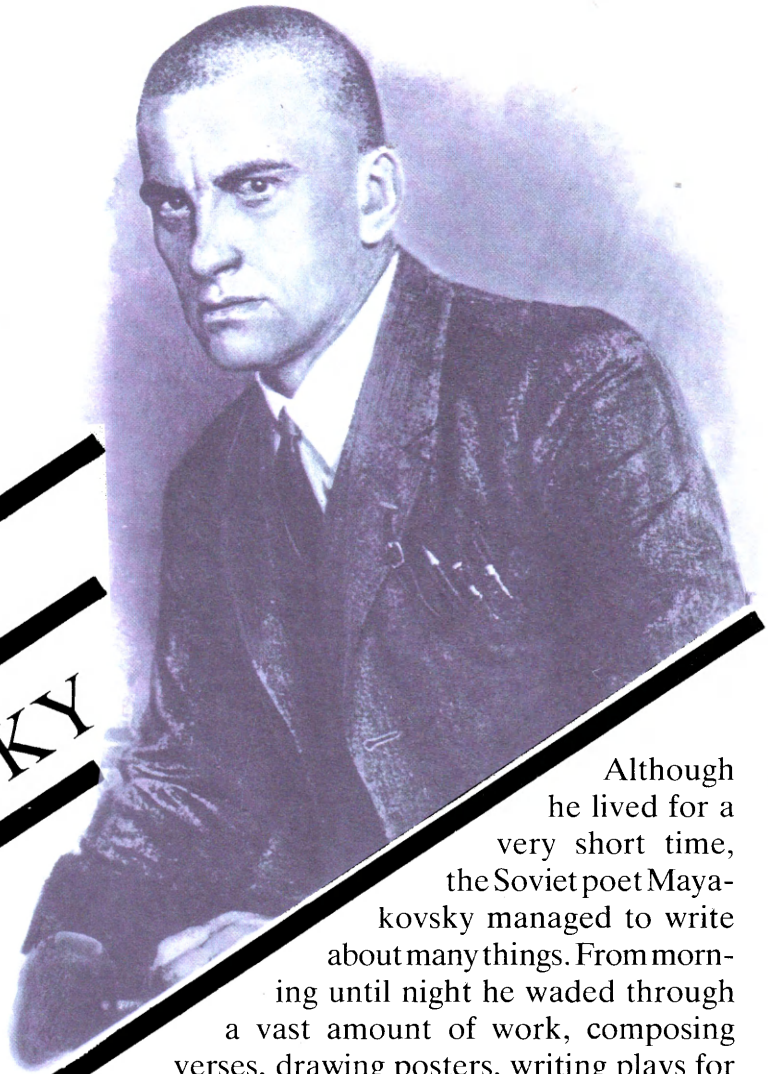
"Oh, how clever you are! Alright then, so be it, ask your question."

"Oh, I've forgotten... Oh, yes... Where did all those horrid enemies really vanish?"

"Why, he gobbled them up, of course. He simply seized them so fast with his tongue that nobody had time to notice, and it seemed as if they had just vanished into thin air. And now it's my turn to ask a question, my little furry one: isn't it time for us to go to sleep? After all, we're also useful and must also do our Useful Work at night, and now it's already morning..."

POEMS





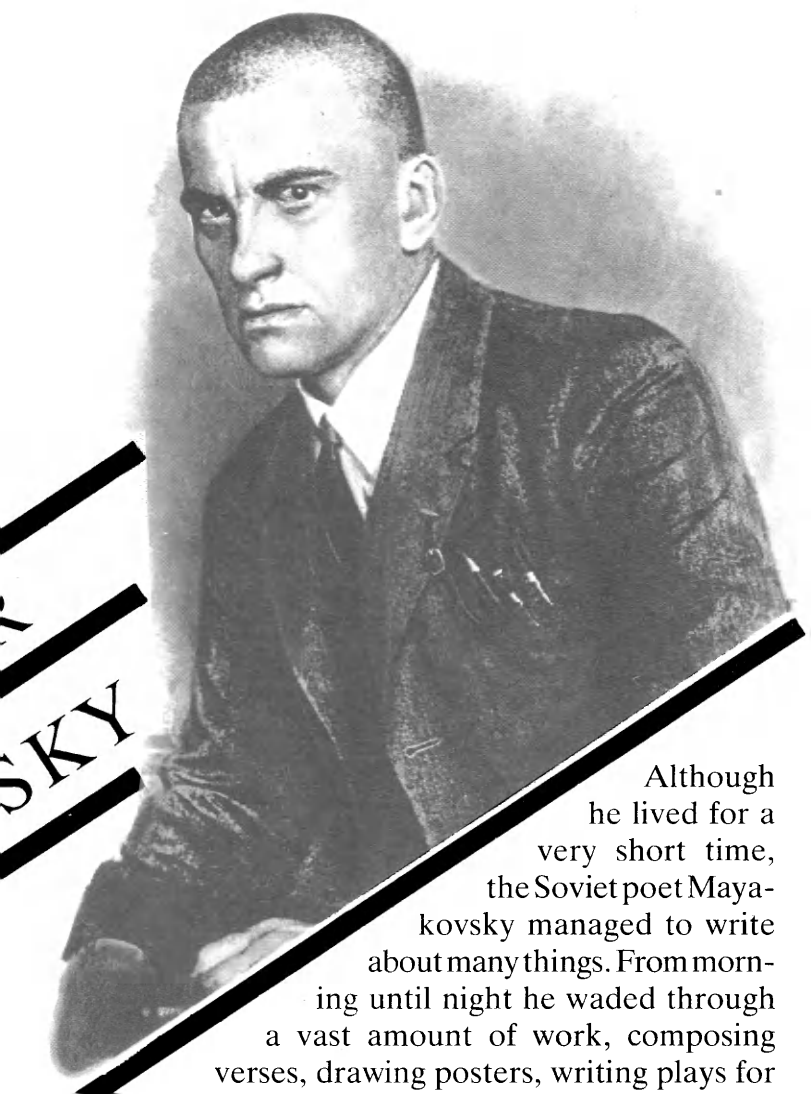
VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY

1893
1930

Although he lived for a very short time, the Soviet poet Mayakovsky managed to write about many things. From morning until night he waded through a vast amount of work, composing verses, drawing posters, writing plays for the theatre, giving public recitals, and also found time to write for children. He loved and respected his young readers very much and in a seemingly jocular style wrote for them about very important matters: *What Shall I Be?, What Is Good And What Is Bad?, This Little Book of Mine Is About the Sea and a Lighthouse.*

Mayakovsky was tall and handsome and had an exceptionally rich voice. Thousands of people could listen for hours to him reciting his poetry in theatre halls and even stadiums.

He wrote about the Revolution and about Lenin and about how the Soviet people had defended their freedom and built a new life. His verses brought joy and confidence to millions of people who had begun to live anew under Lenin's leadership.



SKY

Although he lived for a very short time, the Soviet poet Mayakovsky managed to write about many things. From morning until night he waded through a vast amount of work, composing verses, drawing posters, writing plays for

Vladimir Mayakovsky

WHAT SHALL I BE?*

Time gets along, and I grow up;
I'm seventeen next year.
What shall I choose –
what sort of job
to start
on my career?
Carpenters are clever folk.
Making furniture's no joke;
we take
a big, round log,
first thing,
and to a bench
the log we bring.
Now we saw it –
like that! –
into planks,
long and flat.
After working such a lot
the busy saw
becomes red-hot.
Round about the sawdust flies –
there in yellow heaps it lies.
Now
we take a plane
and set to work again.
Back and forth,
to and fro –
off the knots and snags all go.



* English translation © Progress Publishers 1981.

If
we need
a ball or knob
a lathe is used
to do the job.
One by one we make the parts,
then the work of joining starts.
Wardrobe, armchair,
table, chest –
neat and strong –
the very best!

Making furniture is good
yet building is no worse.
I'd be a builder, yes, I would,
Just let them teach me first.
I'd make a drawing
for a start
Of a house
that's to my heart.

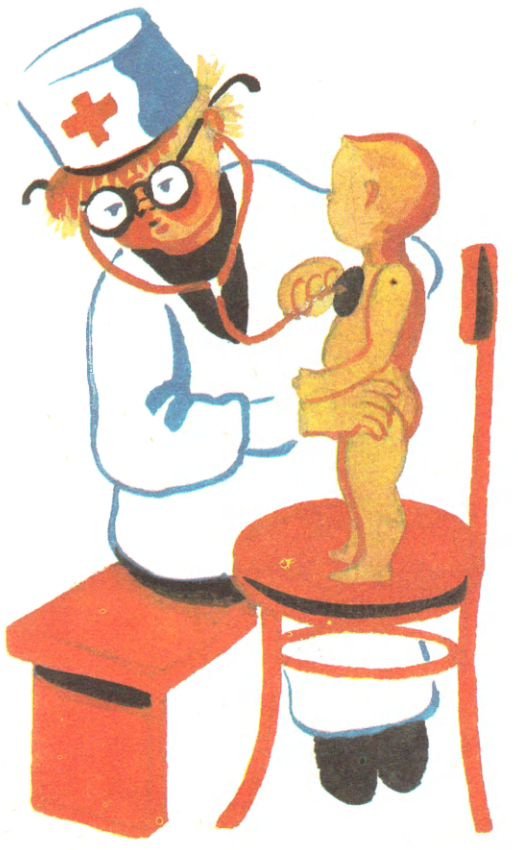
What the builders have to do
is make the house look fine,
spacious, handsome,
nice and new,
windows all ashine!
Here's the front –
it's called *façade*;
there
the garden will be laid.
Here we'll have a gravel path,
there the pantry and the bath.
The drawing's finished.
You and I
and all the rest get busy.
The scaffolding goes up sky-high;
to look down makes you dizzy.



Where
the work's too hard for man
cranes and pulleys
lend a hand;
steel girders
they hoist up like sticks
together with
whole piles of bricks.
We lay tin sheets upon the roof
to make it strong
and waterproof.
The house is ready,
spacious, tall,
and beautiful to see.
There's room enough in it for all
for every family.

It's good to be a builder,
but a doctor's job's no worse.
I'd gladly cure sick children,
just let them teach me first.
I'd go to Pete,
I'd go to Bill:
"Hello there, boys!
Now, who is ill?
Stick your tongue out –
right you are –
that's the spirit –
now say *Ah!*
Put this thermometer
under your tongue.

Don't be afraid,
you won't get stung!"
I'll ask little Bill
to swallow a pill
and give powders to Pete;



each and every I'll treat!
I'll tell little Ned
to stay in bed
till he's healthy again
and forgets his pain!
With a pat on his tummy
I'll turn to his Mummy
and give her prescriptions
for medicine drops.
I'll tell her they ought to
be taken in water
three times a day
till the fever stops.
Of course, a doctor's job is good,
but a worker's is no worse.
I'd be a worker, yes, I would,
just let them teach me first.
Now, stir up, lad,
it's time to go!
Can't you hear the whistle blow?
To the factory we come,
I and Timothy, my chum.
Some jobs
are much too hard
for one.
Together, though, we'll get them done.

Mighty scissors go snip-snip,
cutting iron,
strip by strip.
Cranes go rolling,
huge loads hauling.
Steam-presses pat
steel ingots flat.
Driving lathes
or smelting metal –
every job takes skill and mettle,



and nobody can boast
that his is needed most.
I'll make an iron nut,
and you
forge a tightly-fitting screw.
Then the work of each,
non-stop,
goes to the assembly-shop.

Every screw
gets in its hole,
fixing parts
into one whole.
The rafters shake,
such a noise we make.
Thunder,
lightning,
almost frightening!
And now an engine,
huge and strong,
rolls out
to pull a train along.
It's jolly good,
a factory,
but a tramcar is no worse.
A conductor's
is the job for me,
just let them teach me first.
Conductors!
Aren't they lucky chaps!
With great big bags
on leather straps,
everywhere
and all day long
in their trams
they ride along,
selling tickets to us all:

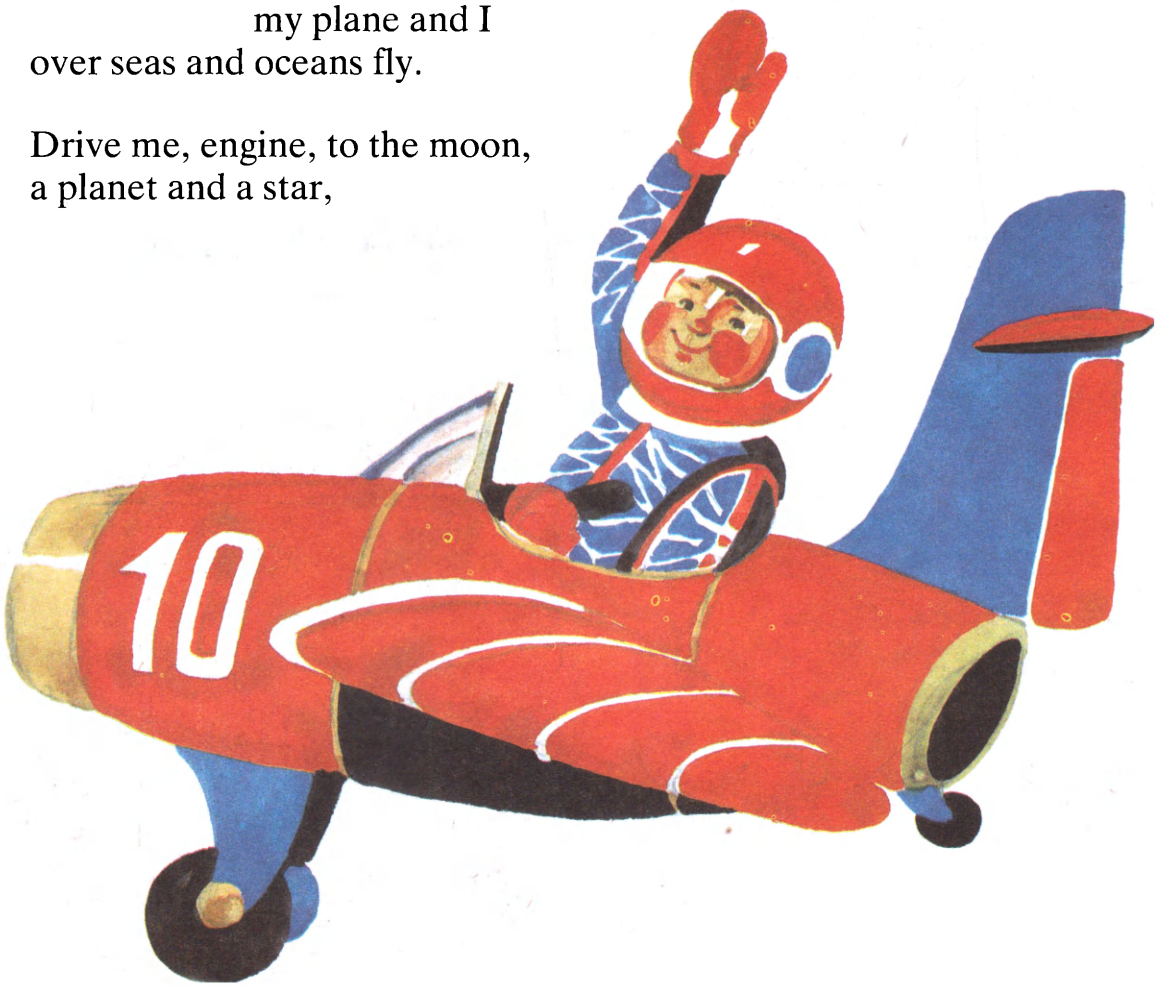


parents, children,
big and small,
tickets yellow,
blue and red
for me, for you,
for Pete and Ned.
Along rails we ride
through the traffic tide.
Now the rails have ended;
get out,
everyone!
Isn't it splendid,
the woods,
the sun!
A conductor's job is good,
but a driver's is no worse.
I'd be a car-driver, I would,
just let them teach me first.
Purr along,
my motor-car;
on and on we glide.
It's wonderful
how fast and far
A motor-car can ride.
Only say
where to,
which way–
home I'll drive you
straightaway!
Hoot-toot-toot,
I blow the horn,
"Don't get in the way!"
I warn.
A driver's job is pretty good,
but a pilot's is no worse.
I'd be a pilot,
yes, I would,



just let them teach me first.
I fill the fuel-tanks
to the top,
the engine starts to roar.
Fly me,
engine,
up and up,
where the eagles soar!
It doesn't matter
if we meet
rain or snow
or hail and sleet –
up we go above the clouds
gathering in fluffy crowds!
Like the birds
my plane and I
over seas and oceans fly.

Drive me, engine, to the moon,
a planet and a star,

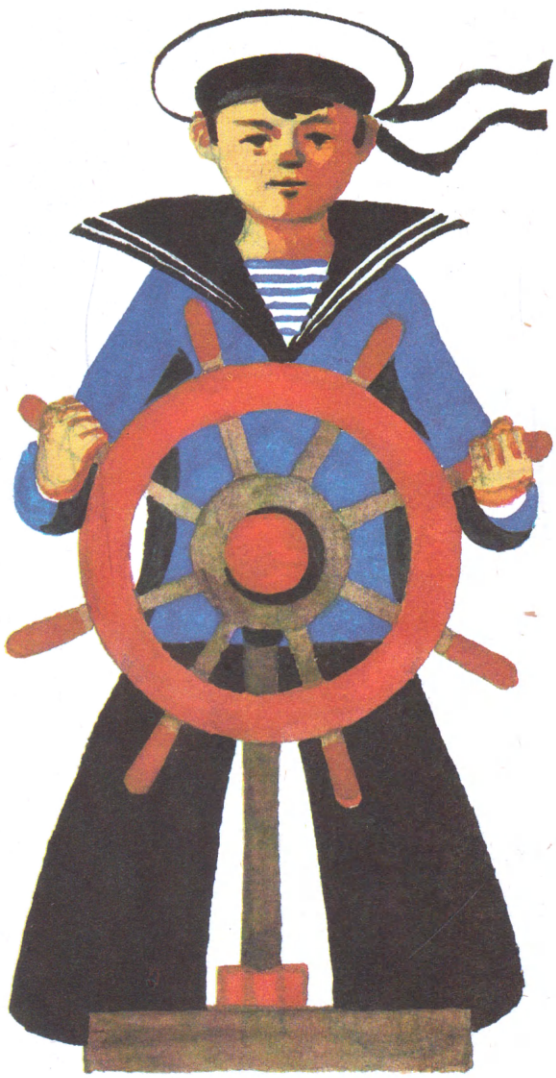


although I know how very far
the stars and planets are!

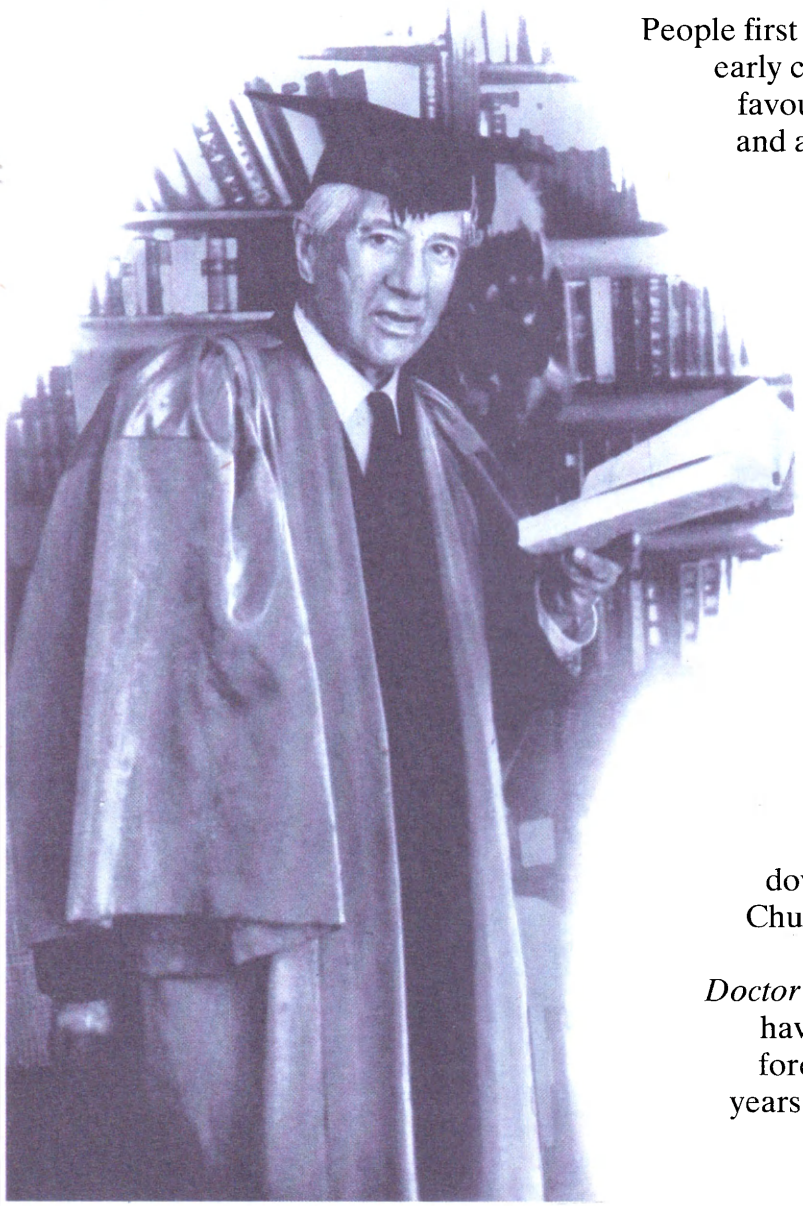
It's true, a pilot's job is good,
but is a sailor's worse?
I'd be a sailor-lad,
I would,
just let them teach me first!
My sailor-hat's
got ribbon-tails,
there's anchors
on my sleeves;
from coast to coast
my steamer sails
across the seven seas!
The waves leap high,
the billows toss,
all roaring angrily.
But I just skim
across their tops,
no waves too high for me!

Calm down,
mad tempest,
shut your mouth,
give up, wind,
and don't wail!
I'll reach the Poles,
both North and South,
in spite of any gale!

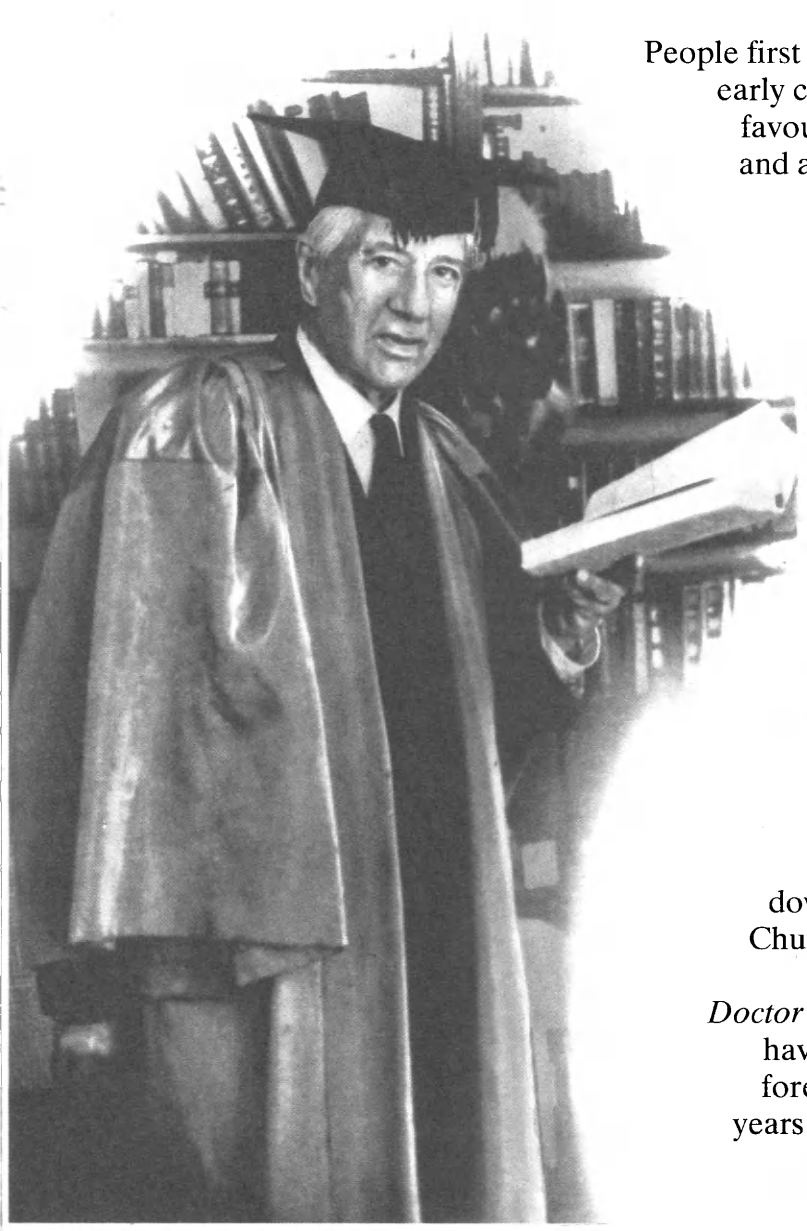
And now my story's told at last,
I hope you've understood:
choose any job
that suits your taste,
for any job
is good!



KORNEI CHUKOVSKY *(1882-1969)*



People first discover Chukovsky in their early childhood. His fairy-tales are favourites among Soviet children and accompany them throughout life as they later read them to their own children and grandchildren... Amusing little scenes, dangerous adventures, sudden mishaps and joyful celebrations are interspersed in his stories like sparkling multi-coloured gems. Chukovsky's amusing, clever and, most importantly, humane books teach one about friendship and comradeship, wittily and skilfully poke fun at slovens, cowards and lazybones and with particular force clamp down on malice and meanness. Chukovsky's rhyming fairy-tales *Wash 'em Clean, Telephone, Doctor Powderpill* and *The Muddle* have been translated into many foreign languages and for many years have won the hearts of little readers all over the world.



People first dis
early chil
favourit
and acc
li

n

fr

co
w
down
Chuko
Wa
Doctor Po
have b
foreig
years ha

n

Kornei Chukovsky

WASH 'EM CLEAN



From my bed
The blanket fled,
And the sheet refused to stay,
And the pillow,
Like a billow,
Gathered up and flew away.

I got up to reach the light,
But it also took to flight.
I decided I would look
At my coloured picture-book –
In a twinkling it had fled,
Hiding underneath the bed.

When I thought I'd have some tea,
Cups and saucers ran from me.
Teaspoons, teapot, cream and eggs
Ran as though they all had legs!

What has happened?
What's the matter?
What's the reason
For this rout?
What a tumult,
What a clatter!
Has the world turned inside out?

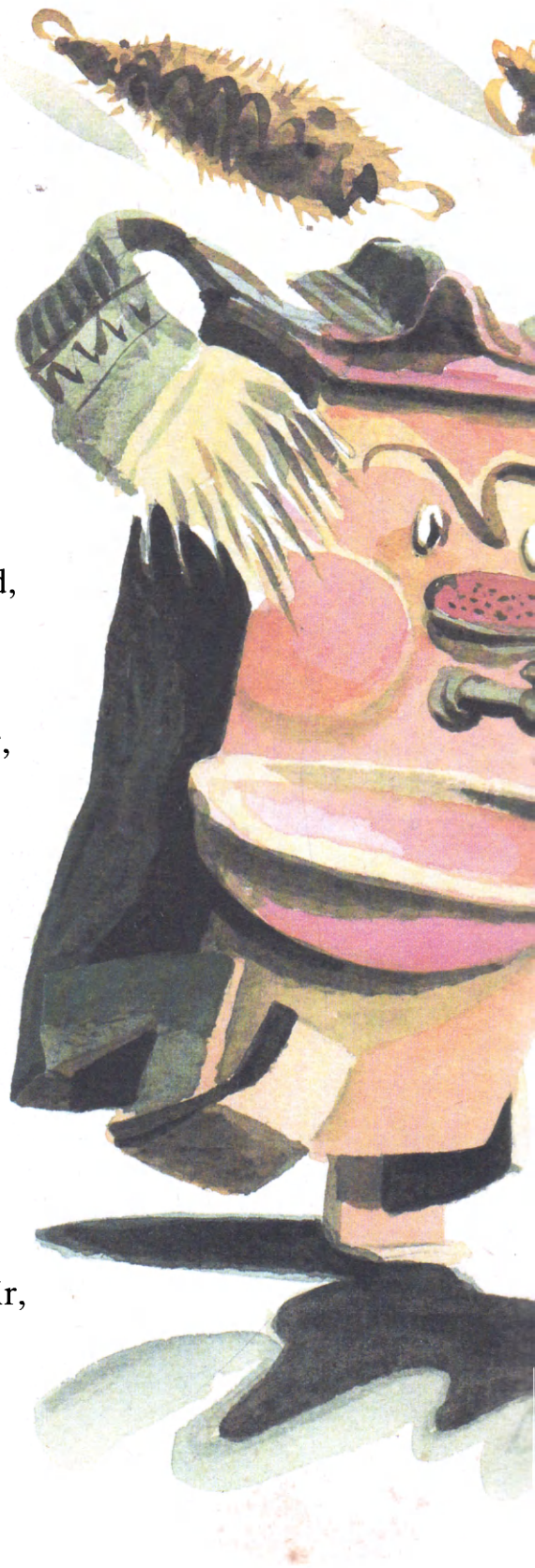
Mother's irons
chased
the dippers,

While the bird-cage
chased
the slippers,
And the slippers
chased the nippers,
And the poker
chased
the toys.

What a tumult,
What a racket,
What a horrid, horrid noise!
Suddenly from Mummy's bedroom,
Crooked-legged, old and lame,
Straight towards me came the wash-stand,
And he scolded as he came:
"Oh, you nasty little slacker!
Oh, you naughty little squirt!
There's no chimney-sweep who's blacker,
There's no pig so fond of dirt!
Take a look into the mirror,
See the ink spots on your nose?
And your neck, your dirty fingers,
Never wash them, I suppose?
So no wonder even stockings
Couldn't stand a sight so shocking.
Every morning, bright and early,
All the little mice go washing,
And the kittens, and the ducklings,
And the ants and spiders, too.

All but you have washed this morning,
Brushed their teeth and combed their hair,
You're the only piggy-wiggy,
So you've nothing left to wear!

I'm a great and famous wash-stand,
'Wash 'Em Clean' is what I'm called.





I command the other wash-stands,
I have troops of sponges bold!

If I stamp, or wave my hand,
All the troops of my command
Will come rushing to this room
With a clangour and a boom!

They will start to snort and howl,
They will stamp their feet and growl.
Though it won't be quite a whipping,
You'll be scrubbed until you gleam.
And a dipping,
And a dipping,
They will give you in the stream!"

Then he smote his bowl of brass,
And he cried: "Kara-baras!"

And at once a swarm of brushes
Chirped and darted round like thrushes,
And they scrubbed, and scrubbed
and scrubbed me,
Saying as they scrubbed and rubbed me:

"We will wash this little blighter
Whiter, whiter, whiter, whiter!
We will scrub this naughty mite
White, white, white, white!"

Then the soap jumped up, or rather,
Simply pounced upon my head,
And it covered me with lather,
Till I thought I'd soon be dead.

To escape the raging sponge,
In the ocean I could plunge,
But it wouldn't let me be,
Everywhere it followed me.

I rushed out into the square,
Jumped across a railing there,
But it followed like a hound
Biting me at every bound.

Suddenly around a turning
I saw dear old Uncle Croc,
With his twins he was returning
From an early morning walk.

And that sponge which dared to follow,
Like a bit of fluff he swallowed.

Then he turned blood-shot eyes, and he glared,
Then he stamped and he shouted and flared.
"What an awful disgrace,"
he exclaimed.
"Go at once wash your face,"
he exclaimed.
"If you don't, I will beat you!"
he cried.
"If you don't, I will eat you!"
he cried.

I ran homeward like a streak of lightning then,
Till in front of "Wash 'Em Clean" I stood again.
Soap and water,
Soap and water,
I applied with all my might.
Washed the dirt off,
Washed the ink off,
Till my face was beaming white.

Back my clothes came in a band,
Jumping straight into my hand.

And a pie stood up on end,
Saying: "You can eat me, friend."

Then an apple from the south
Flew and landed in my mouth.





There's my picture-book returning,
All my toys, both small and big,
There's my book of sums and primer
Joining in a merry jig!

Then the great and famous wash-stand,
"Wash 'Em Clean", as he is called,
Who commands all other wash-stands,
Who has troops of sponges bold,
Ran towards me dancing, prancing,
Kissing me, he said and smiled:

"That's a darling! Now you're splendid,
Now that all your ways have mended,
All your nasty habits ended,
Now you look a decent child!"

Every morning, every evening,
We must play the washing game,
And to those,
Who're always dirty –
Lasting shame!
Lasting shame!

Hurray for towels and sponges!
Hurray for soapy foam!
Hurray for snow-white tooth-paste!
Hurray for brush and comb!

Then let us all wash every morn,
every day,
Let's splash in the water
and merrily play

Washing is healthy
for young and for old,
So glory to water,
both steaming and cold!



In bath-tubs, in wash-tubs, in basins and bowls,
In oceans, in rivers, with boats and with balls.

THE MUDDLE*



Once the kittens raised a row:
"Oh, how dull it is to miaow!
Let us better bark like doggies:
Bow-wow-wow!"

After that the ducklings spoke:
"What's the good of quacking, folk?
Let us better croak like froggies:
Croak-croak-croak!"

So the piglets started miaowing:
"*Miaow-miaow-miaow!*"

And the cats began bow-wowing:
"*Bow-wow-wow!*"

And the ducklings started croaking:
"*Croak-croak-croak!*"

And the chickens started quacking:
"*Quack-quack-quack!*"

Then the sparrow hopped along
And began a milk-cow's song:
"*Moo-oo-oo!*"

Then came Bruin-Touzled-Fur
And instead of *gr-gr-gr*
Said "*Cockadoodledoo!*"

And the cuckoo shouted too:
"Why have I to say *cu-ckoo*?
Let me grunt like little piggies:
Oink-oink-oink!"

* English translation

© Progress Publishers 1976.

Only little Bunny
Didn't think it funny
To say miaow
Or *bow-wow-wow.*
He lay beneath a cabbage-head
And in bunny-language said
To coax his naughty playmates:

"Those who say *miaow*
Shouldn't say *bow-wow.*
Those who say *bow-wow*
Shouldn't say *miaow.*
Toads don't fly and flies
don't browse
Nor can crows turn into cows!"

But the merry cubs and chicks
Wouldn't stop their naughty
tricks,
But went on to shout and roar,
Even louder than before.

Fishes toddled high and dry,
Toads went flying through
the sky.
Mice set traps and caught a cat:
In a mouse-trap Pussy sat,

While the foxes
Took matchboxes,
Walked across the grassy lea
And set fire to the blue sea.

How it burned and how it smoked!
Out a whale's great muzzle poked;
"Fire!" The whale began to shout,
"People, help us put it out!"
Running up, the crocodile
Tried to quench the flames a while
With dry mushrooms, cakes and pies,
Yet the flames still reached the skies.

With a barrel came two hens,
But the flames were too immense.

From the lakes two ruffllings
swam,
Bringing water in a pan.

With a wooden bucket last
Two young frogs came running
fast.

Long they poured and poured
and poured,
But the flames just roared
and roared.





Then a butterfly flew by,
Flapped and fluttered
from the sky;
Quieter, quieter grew
the flames
And went out.





Full of joy, the beasts and birds
Danced and sang in flocks and herds,
Stamped their feet and wagged their tales
Over all the woods and dales.

Baby goslings honked once more
As they used to do before:
"Honk-honk-honk!"

Cats and kittens purred and miaowed:
"Miaow-miaow-purr!"

And the birdies sang aloud:

"Tweet-tweet-tweet!"

Foals and colts began to neigh:
"Hee-haw-haw!"

Flies and beetles buzzed away:
"Zzz-zz-zz!"

And the little froggies croaked:
"Croak-croak-croak!"

And the little ducklings quacked:
"Quack-quack-quack!"

Beasts and birds, both tame and wild,
Flocking in from earth and sky,
Sang in chorus to my child:
"Lulla-lulla-by!"

SAMUEL MARSHAK

1887 · 1964

Something curious once happened to a little boy: he started calling books "marshaks" and was firmly convinced that was what all books were called. This did not happen by chance. Marshak's verse for children accompany readers from early childhood until old age. They are read by toddlers and schoolchildren and give just as much pleasure to adults.

One would need hundreds of pages to describe all that Marshak managed to do in his lifetime. He wrote profound and meaningful verse for adults, novellas, stories, plays and articles, and translated English, Italian, Norwegian, Czech and other poetry, and helped and gave advice to writers who were new to the literary scene.

Marshak loved children and wished for them to lead happy lives and so taught them to say words to themselves which could bring comfort and joy and make them kinder, wiser and more tolerant. "Good books can help anyone who can't find the right words when needs be…," he once wrote.



Samuel Marshak

A HAPPY DAY*



Here are Daddy's
Hat and coat;
Dad's at home –
Hooray!
So there's fun
In store for both
Dad and me
Today.

In the morning
We decide
What we'll do
And where we'll ride.

I sit down
On Daddy's bed,
And discussions
Go ahead.

Shall we visit
A museum?
Or perhaps
It will be best
To get ready for a party
And invite a lot of guests?

Shall we take to a repairshop
My old horse without a head?

---

* English translation

© Raduga Publishers 1982.

Or perhaps
We'll buy a tortoise
As a pet for me instead?

Better though
To get some paper
And some glue
To make a kite.
What a jolly sight it will be
When it starts off
On a flight!

High above the roofs of houses
To the clouds
The kite will speed!



"Time you two got up," said Mother,
Interrupting,
"Yes, indeed!"

"Fine!" we both together said,
Jumping quickly out of bed.
In a trice
Our clothes were on;
Washed and shaved,
Our faces shone.
(Shaved?! Of course,
I won't deny,
It was Dad
Who shaved,
Not I!).

After breakfast
And some tea
On a tram-trip
Off went we.

Clanging, banging,
Down the road
Merrily
The tram-car rode.

I jumped out
Some tram-stops farther.
Out jumped Daddy
After me.
Then with one of Daddy's
cronies
On a motor-car drove we.



Then we raced beneath
the ground
On the Moscow Underground.

Some time later,
For a change,
We went to a shooting-range.
Hit a leopard,
Dad and I;
Four times running –
In the eye,
In the belly,
Tail and head:
Stuffed the leopard full
of lead.

All that day
The sky in Moscow
Was as blue
As blue can be.
White and mauve,
The lilac blossomed
In the gardens prettily.

To the zoo
We paid a visit;
Watched the keepers
for a while
Feed an antelope,
A pheasant
And a grinning crocodile.
Then two elephants were
treated
To a bucketful of beetroot.
In a pool
Lay something wet.

It was Hippo:
Nice, wee pet!

After that
I rode along
On a pony,
Small but strong
Straight,
Then round and round the track,
In a cart
And on his back.

I felt hot,
And Daddy too,
Fit to melt,
In truth.
So we went outside the zoo
To a soda-booth.

Hissing,
From a silver spout
Soda-water
Spurted out.
Half a glass
I got to drink.
I'd have drained a pail,
I think!

On a tram
Back home we came,
A huge bunch
Of lilac bringing.
Up the stairs we trudged,
Half-lame,
Tired,
But just in time
For dinner.

Then the wellknown bell I rang
Ding! – behind the door it sang
And fell quiet.
How quiet it is-
When I'm not at home –
Gee-whiz!



IN THE VAN

A lady sent in the van:
A bag,
A box,
A divan,
A hamper,
A sampler,
Some books,
And a wee little doggy named Snooks.

At the station in Red Banner Street
She was handed a yellow receipt
That listed the things for the van:
A bag,
A box,
A divan,
A hamper,
A sampler,
Some books,
And a wee little doggy named Snooks.

When the luggage was brought to the train,
It was counted all over again,
And packed away in the van:
The bag,
The box,
The divan,
The hamper,
The sampler,
The books,
And the wee little doggy named
Snooks.

But off the wee doggy ran
As soon as the journey began.

And only on reaching the Don
Was it found that the doggy
was gone.
All the luggage was safe
in the van:




The bag,
The box,
The divan,
The hamper,
The sampler,
The books,
But–where was the doggy named Snooks?
Just then an enormous black hound
Came over the rails at a bound.
It was caught and put in the van

Along with the bag and the box,
The hamper,
The sampler,
The books,
Instead of the doggy named
Snooks.

The lady got out of the train
At a station
in southern Ukraine.
She called to a porter, who ran
To bring her the things
in the van:
The bag,
The box,
The divan,
The hamper,
The sampler,
The books,
And the dog–that was
not named Snooks.



The hound gave a terrible growl,
The lady emitted a howl.
"You robbers, you rascals!"
cried she,
"This isn't my dog,
can't you see?"

She tore at the handles
and locks,
She kicked at the bag
and the box,
The hamper,
The sampler,
The books:
"I will have my doggy named
Snooks!"

"Just a minute, dear madam,
don't shout,
And don't throw your luggage
about.
It seems that you sent
in the van:
A bag,
A box,
A divan,
A hamper,
A sampler,
Some books,
And a wee little doggy named
Snooks.

"But the smallest of dogs,
as you know,
In the course of a journey
may grow."

SERGEI MIKHALKOV

1913

Since the publication in 1935 of Mikhalkov's poem *Uncle Steeple*, a kind, generous and huge man called Stepan has won fame in many countries. The poem was a sweeping success, and in the Soviet Union alone has been published over one hundred times in editions of up to twenty million. His poems set to music are sung in schools, on expeditions, by pioneers' camp fires and on all children's festive occasions. The key to Mikhalkov's success lies in his talent for seeing people and events in the fresh and spontaneous way of a child. *What Have You?, The Song of Merry Friends, In the Lenin Museum, What a Find!, My Puppy, Injection* and scores of other lively musical verse have been composed by the poet for schoolchildren of all ages.

The writer's versatile work has been highly appraised by the Soviet Government on many occasions and for his contribution to children's literature and the development of cultural ties between peoples he has been awarded international prizes.



Sergei Mikhalkov

WHAT HAVE YOU?*

Some were sitting on the bench,
Some were looking down the street,
Tolya whistled,
Boris sang,
Nick just sat and swung his feet.

It was near the end of day,
They had tired of their play.

In the sun a puppy lay,
On the fence a sparrow sat,
When we heard somebody say
Just like that,

"Look, I've got a nail, now say
What have you?"
"We have visitors today,
What have you?"

"Yesterday our cat had kittens,
They have fur as soft as silk;
They're all black
with snow-white mittens,
But they won't drink any milk."

"Now we have a cockatoo,
What have you?"
"My big brother has a pair,
There!"

"From our window, 'way up there,
You can see the big Red Square,



* English translation

© Progress Publishers 1980



And from your big window-seat,
Just a little of the street."

"We were walking in the park,
Just the other afternoon,
And we bought a lightish-dark,
Bluish-yellow toy balloon."

"First of all, we had no light
All last night;
Then they're bringing coal today –"
So they say.

"In the fourth place, my Mamma
Will be flying off again,
For you know that my Mamma
Is the pilot of a plane."

Vova answered from the stairs,
"She's a pilot? Well, who cares?"

"Now, I have a cousin Anne;
Her Mum's a militiaman.

"And I know two pioneers
Who have Mummy-engineers.
Vera's Mum's an acrobat.
Mum's a pilot?
What of that?"

"Most important than all others,
Surely, are tram-driver mothers;
And my Mummy," Nata said,
"Drives a tram-car
with two trailers."

Nina shook her little head,
"What is wrong with
Mummy-tailors?

Who would sew the children's
clothes?
Mummy-pilots, I suppose?"

Pilots fly both day and night,
That is very good and right.

Mummy-cooks prepare our food.
That is very right and good.

Mummy-doctors cure the flu,
Schools have Mummy-teachers, too.
Mums are all important, mind.
We need Mums of every kind.

It was near the end of day,
They had nothing more to say.



MY PUPPY*

I had lots of fuss today
When my puppy went astray.
Almost two whole hours I spent
Calling, waiting in torment,
Couldn't eat or
do my homework,
Quite upset by the event.

Long before
The break of day
From its couch it stole away
And at once began to run,
Yelping,
Waking everyone.

Taking fancy to my blanket,
On the floor it tried to yank it.

To the parlour it came running
And upset a jar of honey.

Daddy's poem it tore up,
Fell downstairs, unlucky pup,
Stuck its forepaw into glue…
It then vanished out of view.

Maybe someone came
and stole it,
Led it off upon a string?
By another name they call it–
Make it guard their home,
poor thing…

Maybe in a gloomy wood
Sits my puppy, lost for good,
Never to come home again,
Sulking, soaking in the rain?



* English translation

© Progress Publishers 1980

Two long hours I sat
there waiting,
Couldn't read and couldn't
draw,
Quite forgetting paints
and pencils
Just sat waiting, sad and sore.

Suddenly
A dreadful beast
Through the half-shut doorway
squeezed,
Limping in on muddy paws.
Who was it?
My pup, of course!

What had happened?
My poor pup
I could hardly recognize:
Cheeks all scratched,
Nose swollen up,
Awful bruises near its eyes.
Stinging, buzzing angrily, .
On its tail-tip sat a bee.

Mother told me:
"Shut the door,
Or you'll let
in the whole swarm!"
Tucked in bed, my puppy lies
Till it's sound and hale,
Far too weak to drive off flies
With its bandaged tail.

I don't need a doctor's help–
No, I'll cure my pup myself!



DOUBTING FOMA*

In one of the houses
That stand in our street
Lived doubting Foma
Whom we often did meet.

Whatever they told him,
At home or at school,
He never believed them,
For that
Was his rule.

"It's rainy, and hailing,
And slushy today,
Put on your galoshes,"
His mother would say.

"I do not believe it."
And straight down the street,
He'd walk through the puddles
With soaking wet feet.

The children are skating,
A frosty wind blows;
And grown-ups are dressed
In their warm winter clothes.

"It's cold out," they tell him;
Foma only snorts,
And goes for a walk
Dressed in nothing but shorts.



* English translation

© Progress Publishers 1980.

Once, on an excursion
He went to the Zoo,
They told him,
"Now, that is a new kangaroo."

"I do not believe it,"
He said with an air.
"I think it is simply
An overgrown hare."

Foma had a dream,
He was far from his home,
In Africa,
Where the wild animals roam.
A smouldering sun
Seemed to hang in the sky,
The wide Congo river
Flowed leisurely by.

His pioneer friends said,
"Foma,
Oh beware,
Don't swim,
There are hundreds
of crocodiles there."

"I do not believe it,"
Said he with a grin,
Undressed, there and then,
And dived recklessly in.
On the sand lie his clothes,
While Foma takes a swim,
In that dangerous river,
That river so grim.
The jaws of the crocodile
Drew very near.

"Look out there,
Foma!"
Cried the children in fear.

Across the wide river
His proud answer
Rolled,





"You needn't teach me,
I'm eleven years old."

The crocodile's jaws
Were all ready to bite–
He gave a huge gulp,
And the very last sight
The pioneers had of Foma
Was his head,
And these were the very
Last words that he said:
"I do not believe..."
Then the crocodile sighed
And dived out of sight–
He was well satisfied.

On the sand lie his clothes,
But there's no one to swim,
In that dangerous river,
That river so grim.

And then he woke up
With a dumbfounded stare,
He reached for his clothes
Which were there
on the chair.

Foma, in surprise,
Simply won't trust his eyes,
"It wasn't a dream!"
He indignantly cries.

If you know a doubting
Foma, Nick or Klim,
I wish you would read
This poem to him.



Agnia Barto

(1906-1981)

There is not a single person over five in the Soviet Union who does not know by heart at least one of the poems of the incredibly popular poet Agnia Barto. The following amusing incident happened one day: in a conversation with the writer an acquaintance, wishing to show how much she loved the poet's verses, turned to her daughter and asked: "You know her book, too, don't you?" To which the little girl joyfully replied: "Yes, it's very tattered and thumb-marked!" Her mother was thoroughly embarrassed but Barto hastened to reassure her that she was delighted to hear this for it meant that her book was being read over and over again and not just standing idle on a shelf.

Agnia Barto first saw her name in print at the tender age of nineteen and she always wrote for toddlers just learning to speak and for schoolchildren of various ages. Soviet children's literature is inconceivable without Barto, just as it is without Marshak or Chukovsky, who are its founders and devoted and conscientious parents.

Barto's literary work won high awards at home and abroad.

Agnia Barto

ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL*

One day Nikita ran to school,
When suddenly, *"Gr-Gr!"*
He heard a savage street-dog
growl,
A pup with touzled fur.

Nikita's big–no coward he!–
But Tanya at his side
Squeaked, "Oh, he'll bite me!"
fearfully,
Stopped in her tracks and cried.

Nikita showed his courage here
And saved her, brave and tough.
"Go straight to school,"
said he, "don't fear!"
And drove the monster off.

He was rewarded
with her thanks
For being kind and brave.
He wished he'd have
another chance
His little friend to save.

"Go to the woods and lose
your way,
And I will rescue you–one day!"
To her suggested he.

"Oh no," she said in
a curt tone,
"I'd never go there all alone–
My friends would go with me!"

"Suppose you drown
while bathing, then.
Be sure, I'll rescue you again."
Nikita offered now.



* English translation
© Raduga Publishers 1982.

"I think I'd manage
not to drown!
I swim no worse than you!"
A frown
Appeared on Tanya's brow.

Perhaps she thought him rather
cruel;
He wasn't! All the way
to school
In dreams he saved her, bold
and cool,
From bears and wolves,
from pond and pool...
Then, all too soon,
they entered school.

SERYOZHA'S HOMEWORK*

Seryozha at his table sat.
"I'll do my homework," thought
the lad.
He had to show the hills
and lakes
Upon the map without mistakes.

But then an electrician knocked
And entered, and some time
they talked
Of things like fuses,
which cause fire
When we replace them
with a wire.

The electrician found out then
How folks should jump
from sinking boats,
And that Seryozha's age was
ten,
And airplanes occupied
his thoughts.

But in due course the light
went on–
The meter worked, the man had
gone.
Seryozha at his table sat.
"I'll do my homework," thought
the lad.
He had to show the hills
and lakes
Upon the map without mistakes.

Out of the window, though,
he peered:
The rain had stopped,
the sky had cleared.
The yard was dry,
so out-of-doors

* English translation © Raduga Publishers 1982.

Young football-players came
in force.

Seryozha pushed his books
aside.
"Those lakes can wait!"
Seryozha cried.
They let Seryozha keep
the goal;
Till four he caught and kicked
the ball.

Again at home Seryozha sat.
"I'll do my homework!" thought
the lad.
He had to show the hills
and lakes.
Upon the map without mistakes.

But here his younger brother
Mike
Said he had smashed Seryozha's
bike.



As a result of which a pair
Of battered wheels required repair.
About an hour this occupied,
And then, of course, he took a ride.

For the tenth time Seryozha sat
Before his textbook, luckless lad.
"What heaps of homework they assign!"
Seryozha grumbled with a sigh.
"It's getting late! How long it takes
To learn those blessed hills and lakes!"

LEFT BEHIND

They saw the puppy was well fed:
"We must make sure he grows!"
At night-time they slipped out of bed
And barefoot to his basket sped
To feel his cold, wet nose.

They taught the puppy how to walk,
To heel upon the lead,
Although at first he'd pull and balk
And scamper off when freed.

He learnt to growl at strangers then
Just like a grown-up hound,
Until one dreadful morning when
A bus called, homeward bound.

In vain he waited for a game...
Who'd light the fire and all?
He'd grown used to the campfire's flame,

The camp-routine, each day the same,
The lunch-time bugle call.
He barked till he could bark no more
At the dark bushes round the door.

The camp was struck. He was locked out
In the bare garden all alone.
He didn't want to run about
Or scamper now, but lay flat out
Upon the porch of stone.

He didn't twitch his tail or blink,
He didn't want to eat or drink.

The boys had almost gone half way
When they remembered him.
They turned their bus back straight away:
He would not let them in,
But, barking madly from the steps,
In joyous bounds to meet them leapt,
And hurled himself in their embrace
To lick each merry, smiling face.

MY FIRST VISIT TO THE BALLET

I first went to a ballet when
I was getting on for ten.

My friend Lyuba went with me
To the theatre, and we
Had out coats hung up on stands

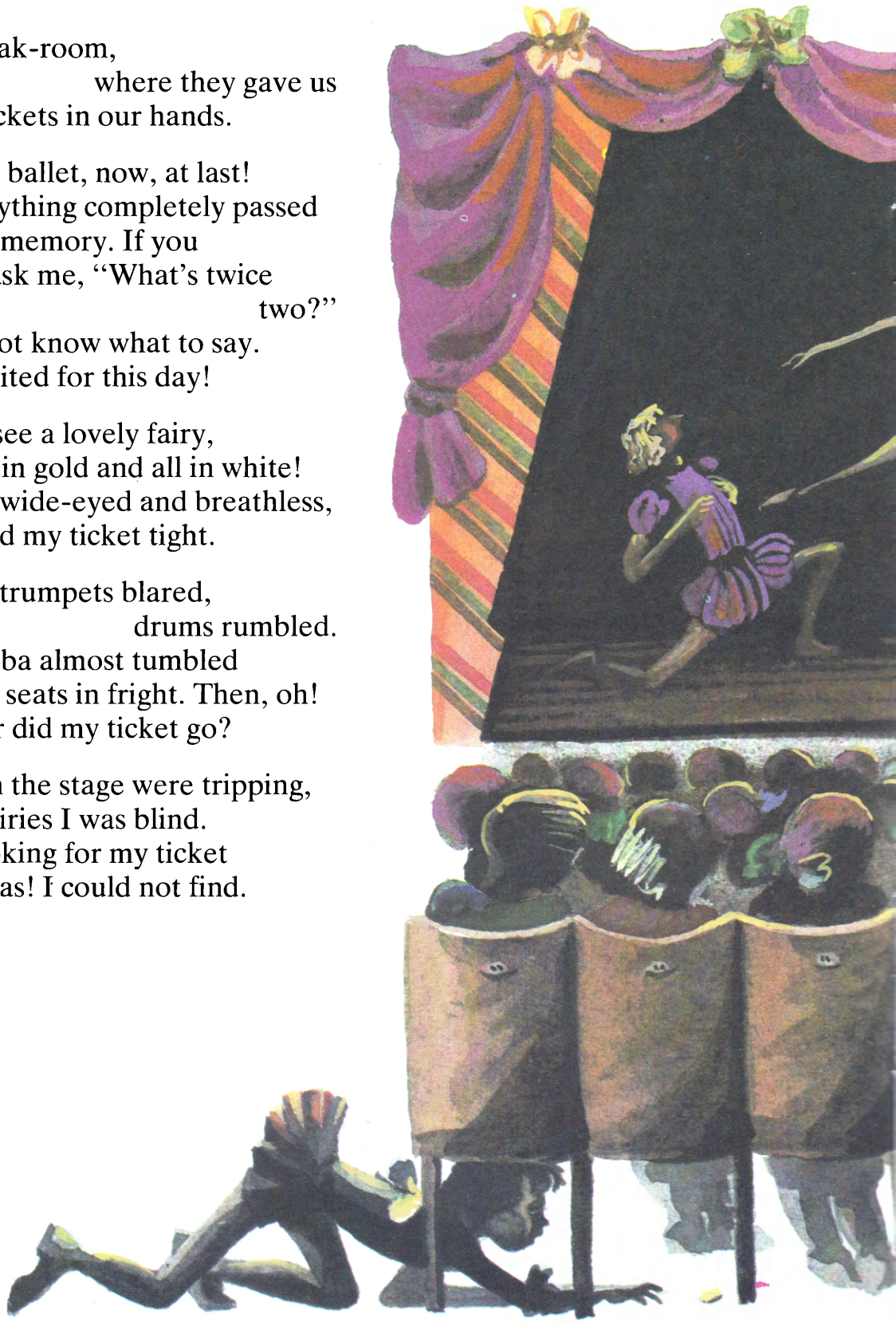
In the cloak-room,
where they gave us
Special tickets in our hands.

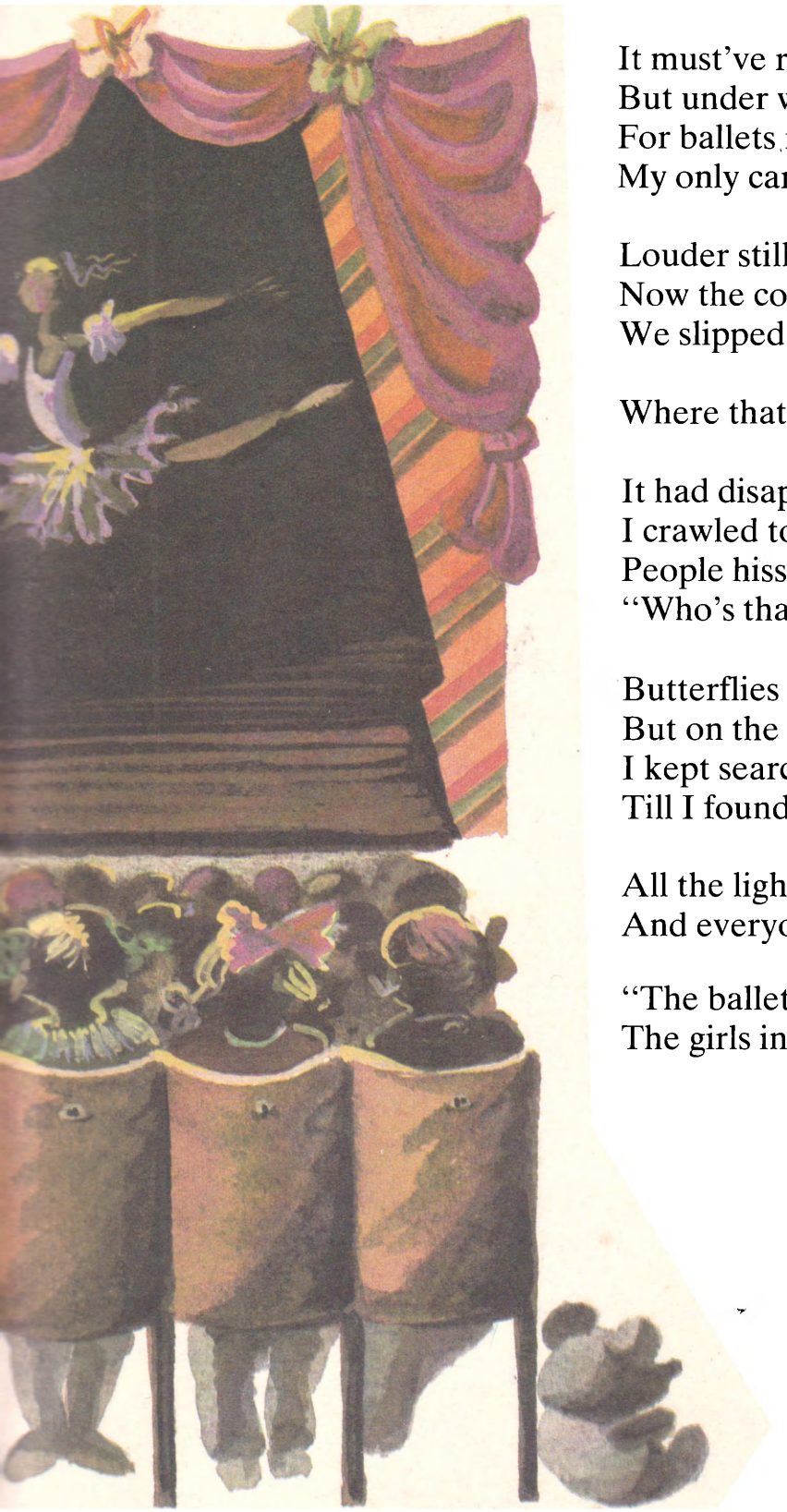
I'm at the ballet, now, at last!
And everything completely passed
From my memory. If you
Were to ask me, "What's twice
two?"
I would not know what to say.
How I waited for this day!

Soon I'd see a lovely fairy,
Crowned in gold and all in white!
I sat still, wide-eyed and breathless,
And I held my ticket tight.

Then the trumpets blared,
drums rumbled.
I and Lyuba almost tumbled
From our seats in fright. Then, oh!
Wherever did my ticket go?

Fairies on the stage were tripping,
But–to fairies I was blind.
I kept looking for my ticket
Which, alas! I could not find.





It must've rolled beneath a chair,
But under which–where is it?
For ballets now I do not care–
My only care's my ticket.

Louder still the music thundered,
Now the cotillion was on.
We slipped down to the floor, and
wondered
Where that ticket could have gone.

It had disappeared completely...
I crawled to the seventh row;
People hissed at us in wonder,
"Who's that crawling there below?"

Butterflies danced in the spotlights,
But on the stage I looked no more–
I kept searching for my ticket,
Till I found it on the floor.

All the lights went up just then,
And everyone walked past me.

"The ballet's lovely," I said, when
The girls in our school asked me.

TINU PUBLIC LIBRARY
Ref. No...
NEW DELHI

REQUEST TO READERS

Raduga Publishers would be glad to have your opinion of this book, its translation and design and any suggestions you may have for future publications.

Please send all your comments to 17, Zubovsky Boulevard, Moscow, USSR.





